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LIFE OF
EUGENE FIELD

THE POET OF CHILDHOOD

BY SLASON THOMPSON



NEW YORK AND LONDON
D. APPLETON AND COMPANY

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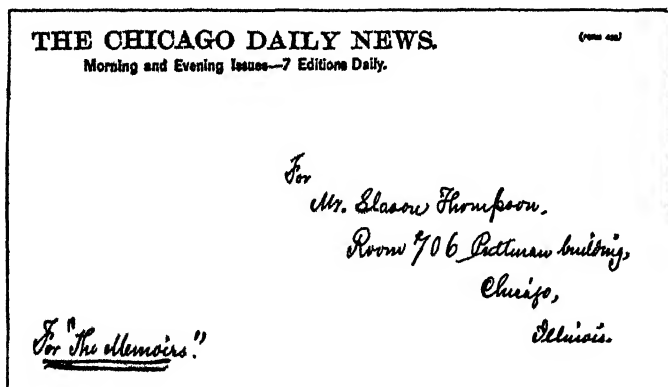
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INTRODUCTION

MY CREDENTIALS

Before undertaking to write anything in the nature of a definite study of the life of any man who in his time has attracted something more than the fleeting attention of his time, it behooves the writer to present his credentials. What are his qualifications for the task, whence does he derive the data upon which he must rely for the embellishment of his narrative, and from whom does he receive the commission to add another book to the countless volumes of biographic lore?

Answering these requirements in the inverse order of their statement, it may be said that the writer hereof got his commission both seriously and in frolic from Eugene Field himself. During the five years that we worked side by side in the editorial rooms of the *Chicago Morning News*, subsequently the *Record*, when he subscribed himself as the "Good but impecunious knight *sans peur et sans monnaie*," Field bombarded me with missives like this:



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My acquaintance with Eugene Field began long before he came to Chicago. Like every other alert newspaper man of the seventies, I kept track of the humorous and paragraphic philosophers of the day. I was old enough to have enjoyed the "goaks" of Artemus Ward, the satirical correspondence of Orpheus C. Kerr, the biting raillery of Petroleum V. Nasby, the quiddities of M. Quad, the Danbury *News* man, and the bad spelling of Josh Billings. They were copied by the press from end to end of the Union and established a school of American wit and persiflage which has survived to this day, much to the dismay of the stiff-collared intellectuals, who prefer Baxter's *Saint's Rest* to Cervantes.

Upon the heels of these merrymaking philosophers and soft-collared wits came Eugene Field, whose early paragraphs were fashioned after their methods, tinged with a New England tang and a western recklessness of his own.

So we of the *Chicago Herald*, a rival of the *Morning News*, published just across Wells Street, were greatly interested when Mr. Stone announced that he had engaged Eugene Field to take the wind out of our sails. Almost coincident with Field's arrival in Chicago a managerial convulsion in the *Herald* catapulted a majority of its editorial and working staff across the street into the employ of Messrs. Stone and Lawson. The *Herald* hegira furnished new managers to both morning and evening editions of the *Daily News* and brought special writers like Harry B. Smith and Mr. and Mrs. Robert B. Peattie, W. S. B. Matthews and a whole flock of ambitious reporters to the standard of Messrs. Stone and Lawson's morning venture. It was that hegira that furnished the liveliest one-third of the staff which Melville E. Stone claimed in his *Fifty Years a Journalist* to be "the greatest in point of ability ever assembled in this country."

In the galaxy of Mr. Stone's stars, I was appointed to the position of chief editorial writer upon general topics

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and assigned to the box stall adjoining that occupied by Eugene Field, with whom my close association began in September, 1883. The intimate companionship and friendship then formed never faltered nor wavered to the day of his death. So long as I remained single he was known about the office as my habit, and when I married in 1887 he celebrated the event in the following sonnet to a forsoken habit:

#

Yr Pitius Complaynt of a Forsoken Habit; a Proper Sonet.

x

<p>Yr boone y take is smallr indeede Compared with what y once did seeku — Soe, ladye, from yr. bounteous meete y pray you kynoly heere mee speker Still is yr. Glasseon my sustporte, As once y was his soules delite — Holds hym not ever in yr. courtu — O lette me haue hym pay-daye nite!</p>	<p>Yr habbit maketh none ouer lye are griffe, and nightlye beseecheth ye</p>
---	--

<p>One nite per weeke is soothly not Too oft to leere hym from yr. charynes; Thinke of my lorne impoverisht lottu And see my jelous pangas and paynes; Thinke of ye shakes y stille do owe — Thinke of my quenchlesse appetite — Thinke of my griffe and thinking co, Oh, lette me haue hym pay-daye nite</p>	<p>ladye Julia yt she ysount hym ye lone of her hooabande on a pay-daye nite</p>
--	--

#

May, 1887.

When I left the *Record* to join with Mr. Hobart Chatfield Taylor (subsequently hyphenated) in founding the periodical *America*, I took with me the original of "Little Boy Blue," which appeared in the first number of that journal of literature and politics. Field continued contributing to *America* during its checkered career and entrusted the

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publication of his first pretentious volumes, *A Little Book of Western Verse* and *A Little Book of Profitable Tales*, to my care and judgment.

Throughout this period I had the good fortune to share in Field's friendship with the innumerable host of men and women that sought the society of the most companionable wit and writer of his time. Among these I will mention only Edward Cowen, who was a beloved crony of Eugene Field from his feverish days in Denver until he sought rest and new scenes in London shortly before his death.

Enough has been written to establish my intimacy with the subject and to give an inkling of how I became possessed of the data for a memoir of the real Eugene Field. It came to me without any effort or purpose on my part to utilize it. The daily envelopes laid upon my table labelled, "For my Memoirs," were regarded by the *Morning News* staff as another Field joke. These envelopes generally contained items of the most ephemeral nature. I will have occasion to refer to some of them later on. If I had preserved them they would make a volume of their own. Autograph hunters have benefited by a majority of them, but enough have been preserved to add their spice to the pages that follow.

The question of my qualifications to write a truthful story of the life of Eugene Field remains. To answer this I can only submit the record of twenty-eight years in journalism in San Francisco, New York and Chicago, as reporter, dramatic critic, playwright, agent of the Associated Press and chief editorial writer on the *Chicago Record* and the *Chicago Times-Herald*. *The Humbler Poets* which I compiled forty years ago, is a standard work current in its fifteenth edition and my *Eugene Field, a Study in Heredity and Contradictions* (Scribner, 1901) has been pronounced by no less an authority than Edward P. Mitchell, who succeeded Charles A. Dana as chief editorial writer of the *New York Sun*, "an exquisite biography," and Mr. Mitchell

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knew and esteemed Field as few eastern "literary fellows" did.

But the reader will be in a better position to judge of the qualifications of the writer when he has read the book.

It may not be amiss to put into the record the opinion of Eugene Field's younger brother, Roswell, of the qualifications of the writer to prepare these memoirs, by his own hand writ in a presentation copy of *The Personality of Thoreau*, by F. B. Sanborn.

"To Slason Thompson,
The Boswell of the
Twentieth Century,
With Christmas Greetings
Roswell Field
Chicago.
December 25, 1901."

In this connection the writer's chief regret is that he had not the Boswellian foresight to avail himself of the opportunity to note down as they occurred the innumerable happy thoughts and queer conceits of Eugene Field that would have made this chronicle one of the most entertaining biographies of all time.

And here I wish on behalf of my present publishers and myself to make acknowledgments to Messrs. Charles Scribner's Sons for their gracious permission to draw freely upon *Eugene Field, a Study in Heredity and Contradictions*, which they published in 1901. In putting the text and illustrations of that *Study* at our disposal they have made this *Life of Eugene Field* possible, for without that material no adequate portrait of my "sweet friend Eugene Field, *The Good Knight sans peur et sans monnaie*," as he so often signed himself, could be written.

LIFE OF EUGENE FIELD

CHAPTER I

PEDIGREE

I AM a Yankee by pedigree and education," wrote Eugene Field to Alice Morse Earle, the author of *The Sabbath in Puritan New England*, "but I was born in that ineffably uninteresting city, St. Louis." How so devoted a son of all that is queer, characteristic and contradictory in New England came to be born in "poor old Mizoorah," as he so often wrote it, is, in itself, a rare romance. Part of it is told in the reports of the Supreme Court of Vermont and the best of it lingers in the memory of the good people of Newfane and Brattleboro, Vermont, who still refer to "them Field boys" as unaccountable creatures, full of odd notions and "dreadful sot when they onct took a notion."

"Them Field boys" were not Eugene and his brother Roswell M., but their father, Roswell Martin, and their uncle, Charles Kellogg Field of Newfane, Vermont. A noteworthy character in any community would have been Roswell Martin Field, the senior, tracing back his forebears on both sides of the houses of Field and Kellogg to the first settlers of New England. He was born in 1807, entered Middlebury College when eleven years old, graduated at fifteen and was admitted to the bar at seventeen. They wasted no time in those good old days. Before he was thirty Roswell Martin Field represented his native town in the General Assembly, was elected several times State's Attorney and in every way seemed destined to play a not-

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able part in the affairs of Vermont. He was an exceptionally accomplished scholar whose knowledge of Greek, Latin, French and German rendered their literature a perennial source upon which to draw for the illustration and embellishment of the virile English of which he was master.

But it is not for his learning or ability that we are interested in Roswell Martin Field but for the strange story that uprooted him from the congenial environment of New England and the career opening before him and transplanted him to Missouri, there to become the father of a youth who by all the laws of heredity and the special bent of his genius should have been born and nurtured amid the stern scenes and fixed customs of Puritan New England.

Now, as every student of the numerous catalogues of the "Old Book Stores" of Boston knows, New England from Cape Cod to the Quebec frontier is the fertile field of the "Family Tree." And nowhere does it flourish and send its roots deeper than in the congenial granite pastures of Vermont and New Hampshire, especially in the neighborhood of Brattleboro, down near the state line of Massachusetts. Therefore it is not surprising to find the progenitor of Eugene Field playing an important part in the genealogical chronicles of Mary R. Cabot's *Annals of Brattleboro*, 1681-1895. As set forth in this delightfully gossipy work, they contribute an enlightening glimpse of the type of ancestry from which Eugene Field inherited so many of the traits that distinguished him.

Honorable Charles Kellogg Field [runs the narrative] came of a distinguished family, his lineage being traceable to John Field, the astronomer, who was born in London about 1550 and who died at Ardsley, England, about 1587. His grandson, Zachariah Field, came to Massachusetts and settled in Dorchester about 1630, but a few years later moved to Hartford, Connecticut, and died in Hartford, Massachusetts, in 1666. From him the line is easily traced to Martin Field, the father of the subject of this sketch, who was born in Leverett, Massachusetts, February 12, 1773, graduated at Williams



ROSWELL MARTIN FIELD
Eugene Field's Father.

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College in 1798, studied law with his uncle Lucius Hubbard at Chester, Vermont, and settled at Newfane at the opening of the nineteenth century. He was a man of rare natural ability, of varied and extensive acquirements, and for thirty years was eminent in his profession and one of the leading men of the state. His wife was sister of the honorable Daniel Kellogg of Brattleboro. Their younger son, Roswell M. Field, was one of the most brilliant and able men Vermont ever produced. The famous romance between him and Mary Almira Phelps, daughter of Doctor Phelps of Windsor, Vermont, removed him to St. Louis in 1839, and he soon became the compeer of the most eminent lawyers of the West. For years before his decease in 1869 he was called the Nestor of the bar of the Southwest. He married, May, 1848, Miss Frances Reed of St. Louis, whose parents were from Windham County, Vermont. Their son, Eugene, the poet, was born September 2, 1850; another son was Roswell M., born September 1, 1851, who studied law in the office of his uncle Charles K. Field. He was a newspaper man and the author of many books and stories.

Charles K. Field, the oldest son, was born in Newfane, April 24, 1803, fitted for college at Amherst, Massachusetts, entered Middlebury College at the age of fifteen and graduated in 1822. After studying law three years in the office of his father, he was admitted to the bar of Windham County and commenced the practice of his profession in Newfane. . . .

Mr. Field inherited many of his father's characteristics, especially his sarcasm, humor and faculty for relating stories of which he possessed an inexhaustible store. He was a great reader, and the best ancient and modern authors were as familiar to him as his village neighbors. His memory was remarkable; he remembered all of value he ever read or heard, and had it at instant command; this with his quick perception, originality, powers of description, wit and humor made him a most entertaining man in conversation, a brilliant public speaker, and a formidable adversary in forensic debate. His judgment of men was unerring; a distinguished jurist of this state once said of him that it made little difference what men said to him he seemed to look right into their minds and read their thoughts. He was a skillful lawyer; few men wielded a keener rapier than he, and he apparently possessed every requisite of a most effective jury advocate; but though he always commanded a large practice he mainly left the trial of jury cases to others, regarding that as an uncertain and unsatisfactory field of enterprise. He was widely known throughout this state and highly respected for his brilliant abilities. He possessed

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a kind sympathetic heart, retained the strongest attachments for his friends and was an honest man. He was the last of that great generation of men composed of the Bradleys, the Kelloggs, the Shafers and the Fields who for more than half a century gave eminence to the bar of Windham County and whose names will always shine in the galaxy of Vermont's distinguished men.

Mr. Field was married to Julia A. Kellogg, of Cooperstown, N. Y., June 28, 1828, and died September 15, 1881.

Henry K. Field, son of the above, born 1848, graduated at Amherst, 1869, admitted to the bar in 1871; married November 25, 1872, and moved to California in 1881.

Charles K. Field, son of the above, born in 1873; graduated Leland Stanford, Jr., University, 1895, and editor *Sunset Magazine*, San Francisco, since 1911.

Through the lineal and collateral lines of this genealogy can be traced the source of the varied qualities, characteristics and personal idiosyncrasies that for a score of years made Eugene Field a marked figure in the newspaper world and a fountain of perennial gayety throughout his journalistic life.

Now let us see how Eugene Field himself looked upon his descent from John Field, the astronomer of the sixteenth century. And here I am obliged to the courtesy of Eugene's cousin, Henry K. Field, mentioned above, for extracting from his personal scrapbook the following article from the Jefferson City *Tribune*, which he, Henry K., thought was sent to his father by Eugene himself:

Some practical wag here at the capitol found a blank commission, filled it out, signed Governor Phelps' name thereto and sent it to Eugene Field. By its terms Eugene was created a full-fledged Brigadier-General of the state militia. To it was attached an order from the Adjutant-General authorizing him, in virtue of his commission, to proceed with all the martial dignity he could bring to bear, and disband and muster out of service the Police Commissioners. Eugene, however, doesn't seem to appreciate the high honor of wearing epaulettes, as will be seen by his letter addressed to the Private Secretary of His Excellency:

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The Journal Editorial Rooms
St. Louis, Feb. 22d, 1878.

MR. R. M. YOST.

DEAR SIR: It is with a bosom heaving with emotions that I address you these lines. The commission which His Excellency has seen fit to bestow upon me was received yesterday and the magnitude of the responsibilities it suggests impels me to a speedy reply. Will you be so kind as to convey to His Excellency, the Governor, my humble thanks for his recognition of my talents and abilities, and at the same time express my regrets that an inward consciousness of my incapacity to fill the rôle he would confer upon me compels me to decline the proffered honor. I am a scion of an illustrious family—illustrious in the tame pursuits of peace, but unknown to the smoke and carnage of war.

Sir John Field was an astronomer; he loved to "rear his head among the stars," and it was with them that he passed a lifetime, and to them that he devoted his genius and talents.

John Field his son was a preacher, a godly man who gave his life, not to the stars, but to the creator of stars.

Zachariah Field was a farmer, devoted to pastoral life; contented with his farm and his flocks he dared not lift his eyes to the stars, but under their mystic light paid worship to them and his maker.

Joseph Field was a physician. He went about doing good, and a generation of undertakers rose up and called him blessed.

Seth Field was a lawyer; he shone in the legal firmament, a worthy satellite of Kent and Blackstone, and his son, Martin Field, trod the same path of glory, leaving behind a record as pure and bright as the first rays of the evening star.

Roswell M. Field was a lawyer, too, and now we find Eugene Field, the son of R. M. Field, the great-great-great-great grandson of Sir John Field, the astronomer, a pure, bright light in the world of literature, a star rising from the horizon and destined ere long to occupy a blazing position in the zenith.

And so you may search the annals of all time, and you will find that the Fields have trod the ways of wisdom, whose ways are ways of pleasantness, and whose paths are paths of PEACE. No gore, no vestige of blood stains our proud escutcheon. If we have battled it has been in the battle of intellect with intellect; if we have slaughtered, it has been to slaughter false doctrines, erroneous ideas and political follies. We have car-

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ried in our right hand gentle peace to silence envious tongues. All the ends we have aimed at have been "our country's, our God's, and Truth's." I am not one formed for war or war's alarms. Of a slender mould, I am possessed of a front which bears upon it the stamp, the unmistakable seal, of the muses and the gentler goddesses. And so I shudder and recoil when I contemplate the life into which His Excellency, with kindly and inconsiderate zeal, would plunge me.

Close fast the iron gates of Janus' temple. Bid Mexico be still and Sitting Bull be forever gone; remand back the railroad strikers to oblivion—then approach me with the honor that belongs to the heroes of bloody strife; but until then, I beseech you, suffer me to lead in quiet that life which I have chosen, and which appears best suited to my retiring spirituelle nature. I am not ungrateful, but I am just—only just to myself and the hundreds of other men by nature accoutred for the strife of war and clamorous for glory upon the field of blood.

Should, however, His Excellency be determined to recognize my worth and talents; should he pursue his intentions of rewarding me for my services to literature and to the State, I beg that he may emulate the example of Mæcenas, who heaped upon the first poet Horace, not the honorary titles of a warrior, but the rewards which Appreciation ever pays to Genius. I humbly seek civic honors—a county judgeship, a notary public's commission—something that will replenish my coffers without endangering my life.

So I kiss your hand and his, and I pray that peace and prosperity may ever attend you, and so will ever pray

EUGENE FIELD

P. S. When you write, please enclose stamp.

This letter is something more than a good specimen of Field's early humor. It gives a fairly accurate line on his lineal descent from John Field of Ardsley, England, whose astronomical tables, calculated on the basis of the Copernican theory, were the first published in England (1550). Another "great" should have been added to the records to cover Jonathan, the son of Joseph and father of Seth. The vocations of his various sires were bestowed with a poet's

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license to meet the immediate needs of Field's declination of military honors.

An echo of Eugene Field's descent from Sir John, the astronomer of the days of Edward VI, will be found in his *Auto-Analysis*, where he says, "I should like to own a big astronomical telescope and a twenty-four tune music-box." His interest in astronomy did not extend beyond a just pride in his ancestor and a delight in peopling the heavens with myriads of starry fancies in his fairy tales.

To the record of forefathers given above a word more should be added in recognition of the influence Esther S. Field, wife of General Martin Field, incidentally mentioned as the "sister of Daniel Kellogg," had upon the life and education of her grandson Eugene. It was to her care that he and his brother Roswell were committed by their father on the death of their mother, and Eugene relates that when entrusting them to Grandma's loving care the father warned her that he did not wish to have his sons imbued with the "superstitions of New England." To this Grandma is said to have replied in these words: "Roswell, I do not know what you mean by 'superstitions,' but of one thing you can rest assured; my grandchildren shall be brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

Something should be added to the glimpses we get of Roswell M., Eugene's father, and Charles K. Field, his uncle, in the preceding pages, as bearing on his inherited qualities. When the two boys were at Middlebury College, Charles, the elder, cut up some pranks that President Bates could not overlook, and he was rusticated. For what reasons or how long he was detained from college the family records do not reveal. He was sent to Montpelier and placed under the care of Parson Wright, the Congregationalist minister there. On what terms he was reinstated his son Henry did not know, but wrote: "I re-

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member to have heard my mother say that the President of the college liked my father notwithstanding his mischief."

But this rustication of Charles moved their father to write a letter to their sister Mary which includes both in his parental wrath and gloomy misgivings. For itself and its bearing upon the inherited characteristics of Eugene, it is worthy of literal quotation:

NEWFANE, March 31st, 1822

DEAR MARY:

I sit down to write you my last letter while you remain at Troy. Yours by Mr. Read was received, in which I find you allude to the "severe and satyrical language" of mine in a former letter. That letter was written upon the conduct of my children, which is an important subject to me. If children are disobedient, a parent has a right to be severe with them. If I recollect right I expressed to you that your two oldest brothers' conduct was reprehensible, and I there predicted their ruin. But I then little thought that I should soon witness the sad consequences of their ill conduct. I received a letter from President Bates about two weeks since and another from Charles the same day, that Charles had been turned away and forever dismissed from the college for his misconduct; Roswell must suffer a public admonition and perhaps more punishment for his evil deeds. Charles was turned out of college the 7th of March, and I wrote on the week after to have him come directly home, but we have heard nothing from him since. Where he is we can form no conjecture. But probably he is five hundred miles distant without money and without friends. I leave you to conjecture the rest. Roswell is left alone at the age of fifteen to get along, if he is permitted to stay through college.

These, Mary, are the consequences of dissipation and bad conduct, and seeing as I do the temper and disposition of my children, and that they "are inclined to evil and that continually," can you wonder that I write with severity to them? Our hopes are blasted as relates to Charles and Roswell, and you cannot conceive the trouble which they have given us. Your mother is almost crazy about them; nor are we without fears as to you. I say now, as I said in my former letter, that I wish my children were all at home at work. I am convinced that an education will only prove injurious to them. If I had as

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many children as had the patriarch Jacob, not one should ever again go nigh a college. It is not a good calculation to educate children for destruction. The boys' conduct has already brought a disgrace upon our family which we can never outgrow. They undoubtedly possess respectable talents and genius, but what are talents worth when wholly employed in mischief?

I have expended almost two thousand dollars in educating the boys, and now just at the close they are sent off in disgrace and infamy. The money is nothing in comparison to the disgrace and ruin that must succeed. Mary, think of these things often, and especially when you feel inclined to be gay and airy. Let your brother's fate be a striking lesson to you. For you may well suppose that you possess something of the same disposition that he does, but I hope that you will exercise more prudence than he has. You must now return home with a fixed resolution to become a steady, sober and industrious girl. Give up literary pursuits and quietly and patiently follow that calling which I am convinced is more proper for my children.

It does appear to me that if children would consider how much anxiety their parents have for them they would conduct themselves properly, if it was only to gratify their parents. But it is not so. Many of them seem determined not only to wound the feelings of the parents in the most cruel manner but also to ruin themselves.

Remember us respectfully to Dr. and Mrs. Willard, and I am your affectionate father

MARTIN FIELD

But things were not so bad as the incensed and foreboding father imagined. Charles was reinstated and he and Roswell graduated with honor. Sister Mary returned Newfane to become the mediator between General Field and his not altogether incorrigible sons, and the mother eventually of another Mary to whom Eugene dedicated his *little Book of Western Verse*.

*A dying mother gave to you
Her child a many years ago;
How in your gracious love he grew,
You know, dear patient heart, you know.*

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*The mother's child you fostered then
Salutes you now and bids you take
These little children of his pen
And love them for the author's sake.*

*To you I dedicate this book,
And as you read it line by line,
Upon its faults as kindly look
As you have always looked on mine.*

Another incident, barely mentioned above, that was destined to become a major circumstance in settling the birth-place and early environment of Eugene Field was the so-called romance that led Roswell M. Field to forsake the maple groves of Windham County and emigrate to St. Louis. The story is worthy a chapter by itself and can only be told in outline here. It began in the summer of 1832 when Roswell was living with his father in General Martin Field's homestead in Newfane. Thither came Miss Mary Almira Phelps from Windsor in the adjoining county of that name. She was pretty, coquettish and fickle and had become entangled in simultaneous engagements with several suitors, that became embarrassing about the time of her visit to Newfane, where she met Roswell, who at first was apparently impervious to her charms and coy ways; but it fell to his lot to drive her to Brattleboro where she was to take the stage for home. As they journeyed along the beautiful road that skirts the West River, Mary Almira became confidential and confided to Roswell the sad plight she was in between two lovers for whom she had no real affection, while she was being hurried into marriage with one of them by ambitious parents. Roswell became sympathetic, as who would not under the circumstances? So when Mary threw herself upon his brotherly friendship for counsel and legal advice and asked what she could do, he merely asked her if she was sure she did not love the suitor in question.

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"Sure!" she ejaculated with decision that anticipated by fifty years the use of that overused affirmative.

"And you are determined not to marry him?" queried Roswell.

"Unalterably!" scornfully replied she.

"And there is no other possibility or probability in sight?" pursued Roswell.

"Not a remote possibility," pouted Mary, with what the novelists call a melting glance into the eyes of the handsome gallant at her side.

Then Roswell melted, and with such calmness as he could command told her that if she would marry him she could go back to Windsor and be forever barred from marrying another.

Mary Almira impulsively accepted the strange proposal and they were privately married by a magistrate at Putney, a small town on the post road to Windsor. After the ceremony the bride took the stage to Windsor, leaving the groom to wend his way back to Newfane. On that lonely journey Roswell fell in love with his bride who was never to be his wife.

Arrived at her home in Windsor Mary, who had married in haste, repented at leisure. The suitor chosen by her mother was on the spot. He had wealth and position beyond the prospects of the young Vermont attorney. Him she married, not awaiting the steps immediately taken to annul the marriage, proceedings which Roswell fought through every court in Vermont. Though every law and precedent was in favor of the Putney marriage, the courts disregarded them rather than illegitimize the innocent offspring of the second marriage, on the ground that Mary was not "fully acquainted with the legal consequences of a solemnization of marriage."

The special pleas drawn and filed by Roswell Field in this case were pronounced by Justice Story to be "masterpieces of special pleading."

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Having exhausted the processes of the law and failed, Roswell Field had no more use for the state whose courts could not preserve inviolate the divine ordinance of marriage, and he determined to emigrate.

What crossroads finger of destiny guided his footsteps to St. Louis rather than to Boston, New York or some other of the scores of more promising fields for his unquestionable talents, it is hard to say. How different might have been the prenatal influences and early environment that shaped the character and career of Eugene Field had Roswell chosen almost any other frontier city in which to practice his profession and forget the makeshift rulings of the courts of Vermont. But St. Louis it was, and there he speedily attained a distinguished position at the bar and achieved a national reputation in the Dred Scott case. For ten years Roswell Field, without fee or hope of reward, fought for the manumission of this friendless slave through the state courts of Missouri to the final hearing and adverse decision of Chief Justice Taney, affirming that the negro belonged to an inferior race with "no rights which the white man was bound to respect" and could be "bought and sold and treated as an ordinary article of merchandise and traffic whenever a profit could be made by it."

Although Roswell Field lost his most famous case, the cause went marching on to the final triumph under the famous apple tree at Appomattox.

At the time Roswell Field took up his residence in St. Louis it was the most important city in the Mississippi valley, having a population of more than 16,000, where Chicago could boast of less than 4,300 inhabitants. The rivalry between the two cities had not begun, and Roswell Field must have reached St. Louis by the same combination of rail, canal and steamboat on the Ohio and Mississippi that Charles Dickens did three years later.

There was another legacy, not so fortunate as those of intellect, personal characteristics and gift for friendship that

PEDIGREE

Roswell left to Eugene, that will be recognized by all who saw the poet waste away just as in the count of years he should have been approaching maturity of physical and mental powers. In the story of Roswell's life we read, "He was averse to active exercise, and for some years before his death he lived a life of studious seclusion, which would have been philosophical had he not violated, in the little care he took of his health, one of the most important lessons which philosophy teaches. At a comparatively early age he died of physical exhaustion, a deterioration of the bodily organs, and an incapacity, on their part, to discharge the vital functions, a wearing out of the machine before the end of the term for which its duration was designed." Those who pursue this narrative to its close will perceive the similitude of the causes that ended the career of father and son before their "allotted space."

Here we must bid adieu to the illustrious line of Fields from Sir John, who loved to "rear his head among the stars," through Zachariah, Joseph, Seth, Jonathan and Martin down to Roswell M., and take up the story of Eugene, whose own works added luster to such worthy ancestry.

CHAPTER II

BIRTH AND BOYHOOD DAYS

HAVING shown in the preceding chapter how Eugene Field came to be born in the southern state of Missouri rather than among the granite rocks and sap-running maples of Vermont, it remains to locate the date and place of his birth, both of which are open to doubt. It was like him to leave them so, for he loved the opportunity uncertainty opened to let sweet fancy juggle with otherwise uninteresting facts.

About the time that Roswell Field became interested in the Dred Scott case, and nine years after he had shaken the dust of Newfane and his escapade with Mary Almira Phelps from his feet, he met, wooed and wed Miss Frances Reed, whose parents hailed from Windham County and whose father was a professional musician. They were married in May, 1848, and in the domestic happiness that followed this union Roswell forgot the bitter cup the Supreme Court of Vermont had held to his lips in annulling his Putney marriage.

At first the newly wed couple took up their residence in a house on Collins Street which has since become a boiler shop. How long they stayed there is not definitely known. In the eight years of their wedded life six children were born to them, only two of whom, Eugene the second and Roswell, survived babyhood. Their first child was born in the home on Collins Street, but they subsequently moved to the house No. 634 South Fifth Street (now Broadway) which is in the middle of a block of houses which bears a tablet marking it as the birthplace of Eugene Field. He lent the authority of his belief, although obviously not of



EUGENE FIELD'S MOTHER

From a daguerreotype taken a year or two before his birth

BIRTH AND BOYHOOD DAYS

his personal recollection, to the Fifth Street birthplace. But his brother Roswell firmly maintained to me that Eugene was born before the family moved to Walsh Row, as the block was called, and therefore heard his first lullabies in the Collins Street residence that now reëchoes to the less soothing choruses of a boiler shop.

Equal and undetermined doubt hangs over the date of Eugene's birth. According to his *Auto-Analysis* already referred to, he first saw the light of day on September 3, 1850. But here again the testimony of his brother Roswell, who had a less fickle recollection of days and things, favors September 2d, upon which date he says they always celebrated the anniversary of Eugene's birth, their father saying that he could not reconcile his mind to the thought that one of his children was born on so memorable an anniversary as September 3rd, the day of Oliver Cromwell's death. Eugene Field undoubtedly fostered the conflict of dates, for he was a stickler for the interchange of tokens on such anniversaries, and surely two anniversaries were better than one. If any of his friends forgot September 2nd, their consciences would prick them to make amends on September 3rd. His admirers have settled the dispute to their satisfaction by placing a tablet to his memory on the house in Walsh Row.*

Whether born on the anniversary of Cromwell's death or on the site of the boiler shop, no gossip survives of any evidences of precocity in the early childhood of the master singer of lullabies. No fairies danced at his birth. They were to come later.

Eugene Field and his brother Roswell were not destined long to know the tender solicitude of that "mother love" Eugene was to sing so constantly and sweetly. She died when he was six years old and Roswell Jr. a year younger. There is no record of how this untimely loss affected either of her sons, and it was not until he was a

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man of forty that we find him paying the following tribute of filial love to her memory:

TO MY MOTHER

*How fair you are, my mother!
Ah, though 'tis many a year
Since you were here,
Still do I see your beauteous face,
And with the glow
Of your dark eyes cometh a glow
Of long ago.
So gentle, too, my mother!
Just as of old, upon my brow,
Like benedictions now,
Falleth your dear hands' touch;
And still, as then,
A voice that glads me over-much
Cometh again,
My fair and gentle mother!*

The whole poem first appeared in Field's column of "Sharps and Flats" in the *Morning Record* of October 25, 1890, and was reprinted in his *Second Book of Verse*, 1892.

In his bereavement, with his waking hours taken up with professional and public affairs of great national moment, Roswell Field's thoughts turned instinctively to his sister Mary of our earlier acquaintance, who was living with her daughter Mary Field French at Amherst, Massachusetts, for a home for his two motherless boys. By a second marriage Mary Field French had become Mrs. Thomas Jones, and it was thus to her home and the loving care of her daughter by her first marriage that Roswell Sr. entrusted Eugene and Roswell Jr. to be brought up in the "nurture and admonition of the Lord" without exposing them to the superstitions of New England. As well put ducks in a pond and expect them not to swim. They got the tender care in full measure, but succeeded in taking the superstitions in

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at the pores, so to speak, and neither was ever thoroughly weaned from the nurture and nourishment they received in that beautiful Amherst homestead.

Mary Field French was at this time a spinster of about thirty years, thus described by Dr. James Tufts of Monson, Massachusetts, Eugene's tutor, whom we will have occasion to meet again:

"A daughter of Mrs. Jones by her first husband, Miss French was a lady of strong mind and much culture, with a sound judgment and decision of character and very gracious manners. She was always sociable and agreeable and so admirably adapted to the charge of the two brothers. Here in this charming home, under the best of New England influences and religious instruction, with nothing harsh or repulsive, the boys could not have found a more congenial home. Indeed, few mothers are able, or even capable, of doing so much for their own children as Miss French did for these two brothers, watching over them incessantly, yet not spoiling them by weak indulgence or repelling them by harsh discipline."

Miss French had her reward, for throughout their manhood Eugene and Roswell retained the warmest affection for their cousin-mother and never wearied in showing her the grateful devotion of loyal sons.

Amid such scenes and attended by the watchful guidance of a truly remarkable woman Eugene Field spent his school days, learning not from assiduous attention to books but from an almost microscopic observation of his companions and especially of the ways and whims of woman-kind with whom he was at this age brought in daily contact.

Of Eugene's life in Amherst we get the truest glimpse through the eyes of his brother Roswell, who has written appreciatively of it. "His boyhood," writes Roswell, "was

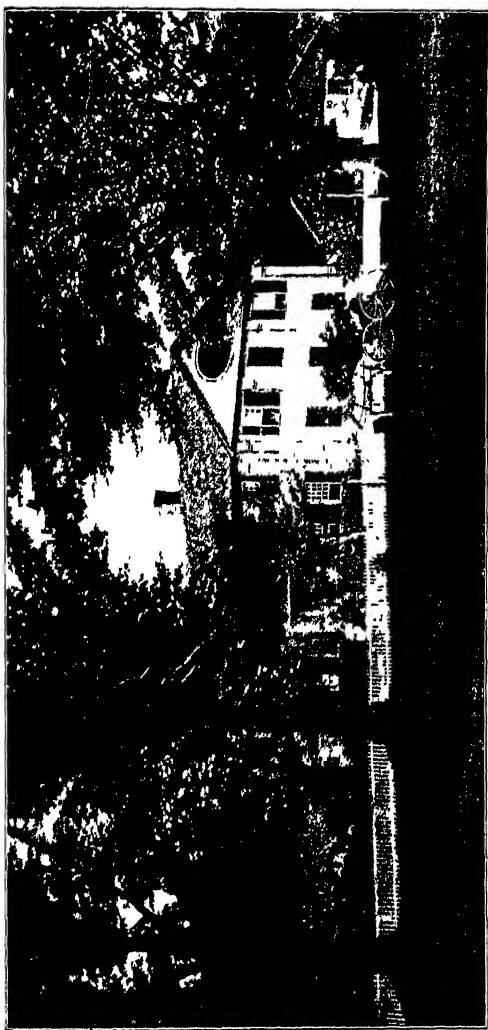
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similar to that of other boys brought up with the best surroundings in a Massachusetts village, where the college atmosphere prevailed. He had his boyish pleasures and trials, his share of that queer mixture of nineteenth-century worldliness and almost austere Puritanism, which is yet characteristic of many New England families." In a letter to Mrs. Earle, author of *The Sabbath in Puritan New England*, Field himself gives the following description of life under such conditions:

"Fourteen years of my life were spent in Newfane, Vermont, and Amherst, Massachusetts. My lovely old grandmother was one of the very elect. How many times have I carried her footstove for her and filled it in the vestry room. I have frozen in the old pew while grandma kept nice and warm and nibbled lozenges and cassia cakes during the meeting. I remember the old sounding board. There was no melodeon in that meetinghouse, and the leader of the choir pitched the tune with a tuning fork. As a boy I used to play hi-spy in the horse shed. But I am not so old —no, a man is still a boy at forty, isn't he?"

This relates rather to his experience with his grandmother at Newfane than to his life with Mary Field French in Amherst, but the atmosphere in these New England villages in the 50's was still redolent of the same pungent mixture of theology and cassia cakes. When in Newfane in 1899 I was informed by a dear old lady in bombazine, who remembered their visits distinctly, that "Eugene and Roswell were wild boys. Not bad, but just too full of old Nick for anything."

However, it was not in Newfane but in Amherst from Cousin Mary and not from his dear Grandmother Esther that Eugene got the New England "bent" in his Missouri mind. It is hard to separate the fact from fancy in his beautiful tribute to "My Grandmother," which he contributed to the *Ladies' Home Journal* in January, 1895. It is chiefly valuable for the description of the old Field mansion



THE FIELD HOMESTEAD AT NEWFANE, VERMONT

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that stood on a corner of the village square until destroyed by fire in August, 1917.

The old homestead [wrote Eugene] was to the south of the common; it was a long two-story frame house with narrow windows and a green front door, upon which there was a curious little brass knocker and a brass door plate bearing the name "General Martin Field." Above the door was an archaic window or transom in the shape of a fan. Three acres of land were around the house, a large front yard and a side yard and an orchard; there were numerous outbuildings, a museum (for my grandfather was an amateur naturalist), a woodshed, a barn, an ice-house and a carriage house. In the carriage house was a monster chaise, and I used to wonder whether there ever was a horse big enough and strong enough to haul it. There was a long gravel walk leading from the front gate to the front door, and on each side of this walk there was a flower-bed, in which, at the proper season, prim daffodils bloomed. On the picket fence which divided the front and side yards there was a sun dial, and just to the north of this dial stood a sassafras tree—you see I recall these details, although twenty-five years have elapsed since I last visited the old homestead in Vermont.

And it is passing strange that having recalled these details the writer failed to mention the most unique feature of the old homestead—the picturesque little white building in the rear, with its miniature Greek columns, facing on the village common, which General Field used as his law office and where his sons Charles K. and Roswell M. studied law and concocted plots to appear in the neighboring Justice of the Peace courts defending suits he instituted.

This small office building was torn down to reduce the fire hazard several years before the homestead was burned.

General Field died in 1833 at the age of sixty and was survived by Eugene's grandmother thirty-four years. So the grandsons had the benefit of her gracious presence and exemplary life until they were well along in their teens. As the boys lived with Cousin Mary from 1856 to 1865, it must have been during occasional visits that he came under

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the nurture and admonitions of the beautiful old lady of the homestead. Indeed Field himself has written that his longest visit there, when he was nine years old, "lasted seven months and the dear old lady got all the grandsons she wanted. She did not invite us to repeat the visit."

But it was during that visit that he became inoculated with the love for pets, which, according to his brother, became a passion. "Unlike other boys," writes Roswell, "he seemed to carry his pets into a higher sphere and to give them personality. For each pet, whether dog, cat, bird, goat or squirrel—he had the family mistrust of a horse—he not only had a name, but it was his delight to fancy that each possessed a peculiar dialect of human speech, and each he addressed in the humorous manner conceived. When in childhood he was conducting a poultry annex to the homestead, each chicken was properly instructed to respond to a peculiar call, and Finniken, Minniken, Winniken, Dump, Poog, Boog seemed to recognize immediately the queer intonations of their master with an intelligence that is not usually accorded to chickens."

Field never got over his whimsical attitude toward animal pets. In his allotted column in the *Chicago Record* of January 9, 1892, he printed a wholly fictitious story of the disappearance of his little fox terrier companion, Jessie, who was credited with all sorts of participation in his work. "We have tried our poems on Jessie," he wrote, "and she always liked them; leastwise she always wagged her tail approvingly and smiled her flatteries as only a very intelligent little dog can. Some folk think that our poetry drove Jessie away from home, but we know better." Then he went on to say that Jessie was last seen playing with a discreet dog friend, in Fullerton Avenue, and apologized for the smallness of a reward offered because "Jessie's master is not rich, for the poetry that fox terriers approve is not remunerative."

The sequel to this two days later was an offer of a

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Maltese cat, but Field, recalling the ravages among manuscripts of Charles A. Dana's famous office cat, declined to replace Jessie with a "truculent kitten (for all felines are naturally truculent)."

It was to the prototype of "The Bench Legged Fyce," known in Miss French's household as "Dooley," that Eugene attributed his first verse, a parody on the well-known lines, "Oh, had I the wings of a dove!" Dooley's song ran:

*Oh, had I wings like a dove I would fly
Away from this world of fleas!
I'd fly all round Miss Emerson's yard
And light on Miss Emerson's trees.*

Although the hero of Field's "The Bench Legged Fyce" was named "Sooner," it has always been my understanding that it was "Dooley" that was immortalized in that "Love Song of Childhood." Where else could he have found so many traits worthy of such a verse as:

*He wuz long in the bar'l like a fyce oughter be;
His color wuz yaller as ever you see;
His tail, curlin' upward, wuz long, loose an' slim—
When he didn't wag it, why the tail it wagged him!
His legs wuz so crooked, my bench legged tup,
Wuz as tall settin' down as he wuz settin' up.*

*When a fellow gets old—I tell you it's nice
To think of his youth and his bench legged fyce.*

It was in those impressionable years spent at Amherst, with that one visit to Newfane, that Eugene Field became imbued with the spirit of New England as imbedded in the strict observance of the Puritan Sabbath, the congregational singing of hymns, especially the simple and sometimes sanguinary selections from Watts, the doleful prayers and many articulated sermons, that remained with him through life and tinged his thoughts and writings to the end. "If,"

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he once said, "I could be grateful to New England for nothing else, I should bless her forevermore for pounding me with the Bible and the Spelling Book."¹ He should not have forgotten the New England Primer and the Shorter Catechism.

There is in the possession of the family the "Notes of a Sermon by E. P. Field," said to have been written by Field at the age of nine, when he affected the middle initial P in honor of Wendell Phillips. But it was more probably written when he was twelve or fourteen, as he showed none of the signs of precocity at nine indicated in its composition. Taking for his text the fifteenth verse of the thirteenth chapter of Proverbs:

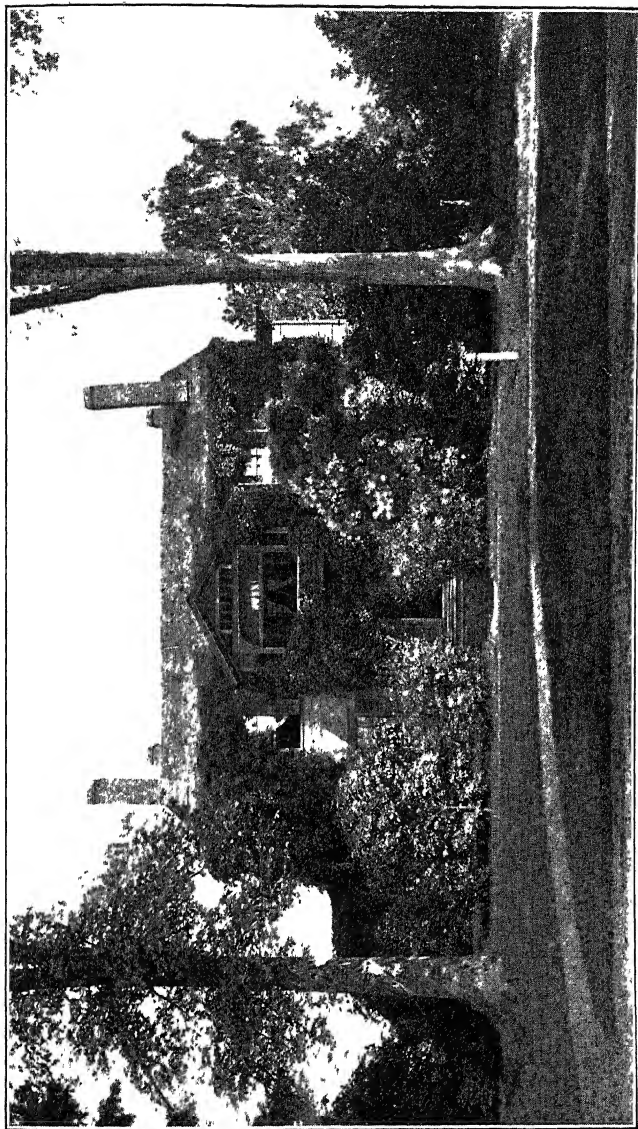
*Good understanding giveth favor;
But the way of the transgressor is hard.*

the youthful pulpiteer proceeded:

The life of a Christian is often compared to a race that is hard and to a battle in which a man must fight hard to win; these comparisons have prevented many from becoming Christians.

But the Bible does not compare the Christian's faith as one of hard labor. But Solomon says wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness and her paths are peace. Under the word transgressor are included all those that disobey their maker, or in shorter words, the ungodly. Every person looking around him will see many who are transgressors and whose lot is very hard.

I remark, secondly, that conscience makes the way of the transgressors hard; for every act of pleasure, every act of guilt his conscience smites him. The last of his stay on earth will appear horrible to the beholder. Some time, however, he will be stayed in his guilt. A death in the family of some favorite object, or be attacked by some disease himself is brought to the portals of the grave. Then for a little time, perhaps, he is stayed in his wickedness, but before long he returns to his worldly lusts. Oh, it is indeed hard for a sinner to go down into perhaps perdition over all the obstacles which God has placed in his path. But many, I am afraid, do go down into perdition, for wide is the gate and broad the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be that go in after it.



THE HOMESTEAD AT AMHERST, MASSACHUSETTS
Now owned by Mr. Hiram Heaton, of New York

BIRTH AND BOYHOOD DAYS

Suppose now there was a fearful precipice and to allure you there your enemies should scatter flowers on its dreadful edge, would you if you knew that while you were strolling about on that awful rock that night would settle down on you and that you would fall from that giddy, giddy height, would you, I say, go near that dreadful rock? Just so with the transgressor, he falls from that height just because he wishes to appear good in the sight of the world. But what will a man gain if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul.

Whenever written, this schoolboy effort shows that it was a paraphrased memory of the fearful sermons the first half of the nineteenth century produced rather than the original production of a precocious boy. Mark how the cant phrases of the period stalk fiercely through the turgid rhetoric of the youthful saint—or sinner. Mark also how it departs from the beautiful cadence of the King James version, to which Field became such a devotee, in the boy's version of the apostrophe to Wisdom: "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace."

All through his life Eugene Field apparently cherished contradictory impressions of New England and Vermont. One view was tinged, it seems, with the recollections of the wrong his father suffered at the hands of the Green Mountain courts and is reflected in the general tenor of his comments on Vermont men and affairs. The name of Phelps, for instance, familiar in the state annals, never appeared in the exchanges without putting his caustic pen on edge. But generally his comments on the perpendicular state were couched in such droll terms as in this paragraph at the time President Cleveland named the first Interstate Commerce Commission:

The Vermont papers agree that Colonel Aldace Walker is the very best man in Vermont for the Interstate Commerce Commission. This may be true. At the same time, however, we fail to see what interest Vermont can possibly take in interstate commerce. She has no commerce of her own and she probably never will have. There is a bobbin factory at Williamsville and a melodeon factory at Brattle-

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boro, but the commerce resulting from them is not worthy of mention. There is talk about the maple sugar that Vermont exports, but we have noticed that all the genuine Vermont maple sugar in the western market comes from the South, and is about as succulent as the heel of a gum-boot. In all the state of Vermont there is but one railroad, the Vermont Central; it begins at Grout's Corner, Mass., and runs in a bee-line north until it reaches the southern end of the Montreal bridge. This remarkable road has a so-called branch operating once per week between White River Junction and Montpelier and a tri-weekly branch extending to Burlington. Montpelier is the home of Hiram Atkins, the famous "Nestor of Checkerberry Journalism," and White River Junction is the whistling station and water tank from which our country gets its election returns every four years. Burlington is located on Lake Champlain, and contains the summer residence of that grand old survivor of the glacial period George F. Edmunds. Thus, in a brief paragraph, have we compressed all that can be said of the commerce and railways of Vermont.

The other view is one of those visions that arise in the mind of every man when "fond memory" carries him back to scenes and surroundings of childhood. When traced on paper by a pen that has learned the secret of touching the hidden chords of human sentiment, they enrich our literature with such an expression as this, embedded in Field's memorial to his foster mother, Mrs. Melvin Gray, written while he was in southern California:

The quiet beauty of these scenes recalls a time which, in my life, is so long ago that I feel strangely reverential when I speak of it. I find myself thinking of my boyhood, and of the hills and valleys and trees and flowers and birds I knew when the morning of my life was fresh and full of exuberance. Those years were spent among the Pelham hills, very, very far from here; but memory o'erleaps the mountain ranges, the leagues upon leagues of prairie, the mighty rivers, the forest, the farming lands, o'erleaps them all; and today, by that same sweet magic that instantaneously undoes the years and space, I seem to be among the Pelham hills again. The yonder glimpse of the Pacific becomes the silver thread of the Connecticut, seen, not over miles of orange groves, but over broad acres of Indian corn; instead of the pepper and eucalyptus, the lemon and the palm, I see (or I seem to see) the maple once more and the elm and the chestnut trees,

BIRTH AND BOYHOOD DAYS

the shagbark walnut, the hickory, and the birch. In those days, these rugged mountains of this southland were unknown to me; and the Pelham hills were full of marvel and delight, with their tangled pathways and hidden stores of wintergreen and wild strawberries. Furtive brooks led the little boy hither and thither in his quest for trout and dace, while to the gentler minded the modest flowers of the wildwood appealed with singular directness. A partridge rose now and then from the thicket and whirred away, and with startled eyes the brown thrush peered out from the bushes. I see these pleasant scenes again, and I hear again the beloved sounds of old; and so with reverence and with welcoming I take up my task, for it was among these same Pelham hills that the dear lady of whom I am to speak was born and spent her childhood.

Figuratively Eugene Field had to travel through leagues and leagues of literature from the schools and songs and sermons, the books and running brooks of those Pelham hills before he commanded that style of "English unde-filed" that paid part of the debt of affection he was to owe Melvin L. Gray and his beloved and beautiful wife.

Among the accomplishments by which the youthful Eugene endeared himself to his companions and amused his elders was the ability to draw most wonderful and fearful pictures of hobgoblins and fairies, flubdubs and nameless monsters. His brother Roswell says that he acquired the facility of making pictures of his playmates and pets and later in life held to the opinion that he might have been more successful as a caricaturist than as a writer. But nothing that survives justifies such an opinion. He had a knack of making grotesque and ludicrous pictures. But he never got beyond the most fanciful attempts at the art productive of art. In truth he never tried to. To the end he delighted in making such nonsensical drawings as the Flubdub shown on page 392.

CHAPTER III

SCHOOL AND COLLEGE DAYS

SCHOOLS in the way of "book larnin' " did not count for much in the young life of Eugene Field, nor for that matter did colleges either. The rural walks and shades of the Pelham hills, under the loving and gentle ministrations of Miss French, were not calculated to instill into his care-free mind a passion for the acquirement of the rudiments of an education comparable with that which fitted his father for Middlebury College at the age of eleven and for graduation at fifteen. It is almost impossible to imagine a more desultory preparation for school and college than brought Eugene Field to the foot of the long grade that was to make him a master of English diction.

At almost exactly the age at which his father was graduating, it was decided that Eugene should exchange the freedom of the Pelham hills for the easy discipline of the private school of the Rev. James Tufts at Monson, Mass. It is not known what influence decided the choice of Monson. It is a prettily situated village on the south bank of the Chicopee river, about fifteen miles east of Springfield and not more than twenty-five from Amherst, as the crow flies. It boasted a well-equipped boys' academy, to whose routine of work and play Eugene might have been safely entrusted and where he would have had the benefit of attrition with a fine class of youths of his own age. But, for seemingly sufficient reasons, his guardians decided that private tutoring under the guidance of Mr. Tufts and the motherly ministrations of Mrs. Tufts promised better results than the classes of a conventional New England academy. Roswell Field has testified to the high qualifications

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of Mr. Tufts that he was "one of those noble instructors of the blessed old school, who are passing away from the arena of education in America. By Mr. Tufts he was fitted for college, and from the enthusiasm of this old scholar he caught, *perhaps*, the inspiration for the love of the classics which he carried through life."

There is much virtue in that "perhaps" thus casually used by the devoted brother, who knew that the love of the classics was a slow development that stole stealthily on Eugene long after he had forgotten the neglected books of school and college. Of the two boys, Eugene and Roswell, the latter took more from the studies of the classroom and the former from the birds, insects and smaller animals that abounded in the Monson meadows and neighboring woods.

From the lips of Mr. Tufts and the lively comments of his wife and an article written for the *Springfield Republican* shortly after Eugene Field's death by his remarkable and venerable preceptor, it is possible to reconstruct a fair picture of his life at Monson. Thither he came in the fall of 1865 and was taken into the Tufts' home and family along with five other boys because he would not receive the proper care at a large school, where "he would be likely to get into trouble with his love of fun and mischief." Those last three words touch the springs of action in the boy that were to go far with the man and abide to the end.

The house in which Field became as one of the family is situated about a mile from the center of the village, facing the post road, on the farther side of which is a mill pond, over whose dam the boys were once swept in a crazy craft of their own building.

Back of the Tufts homestead rise some beautifully wooded hills to which Field and his schoolmates retired when in disgrace with Mr. Tufts over their frequent delinquencies. Here they built a "moated castle" in the most inaccessible part of the forest, which they surrounded with

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a deep trench hidden by boughs and brushwood. Hither they lured the kind preceptor, who plunged into the tangled mass of boughs and mud while his tormentors shouted and jeered from the solid bank. Mr. Tufts cherished no resentment, "for," he said to me, "it was impossible to bear anger against a pupil whose contrition was as profound and whimsical as his transgressions were frequent. The boys were boys."

When Field came to Monson, Mr. Tufts testifies that "in his studies he was about fitted for an ordinary high school, except in arithmetic. He had read a little Latin, enough to commence Cæsar. I found him an average boy in his lessons, not dull, but not a quick and ready scholar like his father, who graduated from Middlebury College at the age of fifteen, strong and athletic.

"He did not seem to care much for his books," pursued Mr. Tufts, "or his lessons anyway, but was inclined to get along as easily as he could, partly on account of his delicate health, which made close study irksome, and partly because his mind was very juvenile and undeveloped. His health improved gradually, while his interest in his studies increased slowly but steadily. Judge Forbes, of Westboro, for a time his roommate and a remarkable scholar, remarked on reading his journal that his chum occasionally took up his book for study when his teacher came around, though he was not always particular which side up the book was. And so it was through life."

But during the last six months before leaving to enter Williams College in 1868, Mr. Tufts saw signs of improvement. Eugene "did seem to catch something of the spirit of Cicero and Virgil and Homer," but no mention was made of Horace. It would have been strange indeed if a youth endowed with an ear so responsive to the finest shades of sound had not caught on to the verbal beauties of the named authors, whose "linked sweetness" has echoed through the centuries. "Eugene," continues Mr. Tufts,



At Twelve.



At Eighteen



At Nineteen.



At Twenty nine.

EARLY PORTRAITS OF EUGENE FIELD

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"gave little if any indication of becoming a poet, or even a superior writer, in his youth. He was always, however, bright and lively in conversation, abounding in wit, self-possessed, and never laughing at his own jokes, showing, too, some of that exhaustless fountain of humor in which he afterward excelled. But he did not like close application, nor did he have patience to correct and improve what he wrote, as he afterward did when his taste was more cultivated. In declamation Eugene always excelled, reciting with marked effect 'Spartacus,' 'The Soldier of the Legion' and 'The Dream of Clarence' from Shakespeare. He inherited from his father a rich, strong, musical and sympathetic voice, which made him a pleasant speaker and afterward a successful public reader."

On one occasion Eugene, wearied of the persistent efforts of Mr. Tufts to bend his youthful mind toward the tree of knowledge, started off afoot for his home in Amherst. For twenty-five miles he followed the railway track, counting the ties, 2,400 or so to the mile, and arrived thoroughly exhausted and contrite—also ready to take the next train back to Monson. This experience convinced Eugene that his forte was not pedestrianism.

At the age of eighteen, according to Mr. Tufts, Eugene Field was barely able to pass the examination for entrance at Williams "with some conditions." The college register bears this simple entry:

"Eugene Field, aged 18, September 5, 1868, son of R. M. Field, St. Louis."

When I visited Williamstown in 1900, hoping to find at least an "E. F." carved on a dilapidated bench to mark Field's temporary sojourn in those classic shades, neither among the professors of Williams nor the townsfolk was there a credible trace that he had passed that way. Evidently he had made no more impression on Williams than Williams did on him. From an outside source, I heard a story that President Mark Hopkins, of gracious memory,

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meeting Field on the street one day asked how he was getting along with his studies. Eugene replied that he was doing very well. Whereupon President Hopkins remarked, "I am glad to hear it, for, remember you have the reputation of three universities to maintain." Whether this story was a prophetic invention, so apt after Field had flitted through Williams, Knox and Columbia, or was based on President Hopkins' knowledge that Field's grandfather held an A.B. from Williams and an honorary degree of A.M. from Dartmouth, while his father was a graduate of Middlebury, deponent sayeth not, and nobody in Williamstown could enlighten him.

There is a tradition at Williams, apparently improvised after Field had achieved a name, that he did fairly well in his Latin themes when the subjects appealed to his fancy. But his fancy was in the habit of running into the byways of the classics rather than in the conventional paths followed by the professors in their classes if not outside. The very traits that made Field the most entertaining of companions provoked consternation and uneasiness at Williams. So it came about that President Hopkins presently informed his old friend James Tufts that it might be well for his pupil, as it certainly would conduce to the peace and orderly life of the college, if he would run up from Monson and persuade Eugene to return home with him. There was no formal dismissal, no rustication, no official reprimand of Field by the ever honored and just President Hopkins. Eugene just faded out of the beautiful landscape of Williamstown, and the annals and class of 1872 knew him no more than if he had never been a freshman at Williams.

It is not strange that there should have been a perceptible chill in the collegiate air when I sought to revive some memories of Eugene Field among the faculty in 1900. President Franklin Carter might be pardoned for not cherishing particularly kindly feelings for the paragrapher who

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in discussing his qualifications to succeed President Hopkins had jestingly suggested that they rested upon his contribution of "a small but active pellet" to the pharmaceutical equipment of his countrymen, famed for its efficiency to cure all disorders of mind and body "while you sleep." It is not in mortals to accept with equanimity such a fictitious identification.

Old Tom McMahon, who was a familiar character to the student body at Williams a generation ago, had a hazy recollection of the eccentric Eugene, who flitted across the college campus in 1868. He said that if he "remembered right Mr. Field was not one of the gentlemen who cared much for his clothes," but he "guessed he was made careless like," and he certainly was.

The most intimate glimpse of Field at Williams is furnished the writer in a letter from Solomon B. Griffin, for many years the managing editor of the *Springfield Republican*. He not only knew Field at Williamstown, but was one of his lifelong friends and admirers. Under date of Springfield, February 4, 1901, he wrote:

Yes, I was of the class of 1872, but Field flitted before I became connected with it. But Williamstown was my birthplace and home, and I struck up an acquaintance with him at Smith's college book store and the post office. Field was raw and not a bit deferential to established customs, and so the secret society men were not attracted to him. The "trotting" or preliminary attentions to freshmen constitute a great and revered feature of college life. When I saw Field "trotting" a lank and gawky freshman, for the "Mills Theological Society," the humor of it appealed to one soaked in the traditions of a college town, and we "became acquainted." Field left the class about as I came in.

It is not remarkable that Tom McMahon has no clear recollection of Field, who was in college only about six months and was not a fraternity man. There were so many coming and going! Nor that the faculty should be mindful of the lawless, irresponsible boy and not of the genius that developed on its own lines and was never conventionalized but always remained a sinner, however brilliant, and a flayer of good men unblessed

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with a saving sense of humor. If there is any kind thought for me in my old home it is because I did what Field couldn't do, paid outward respect to the environment. It was possible for me to see his point of view and theirs—to them irreconcilable, and to him also.

Sincerely yours,
S. B. GRIFFIN

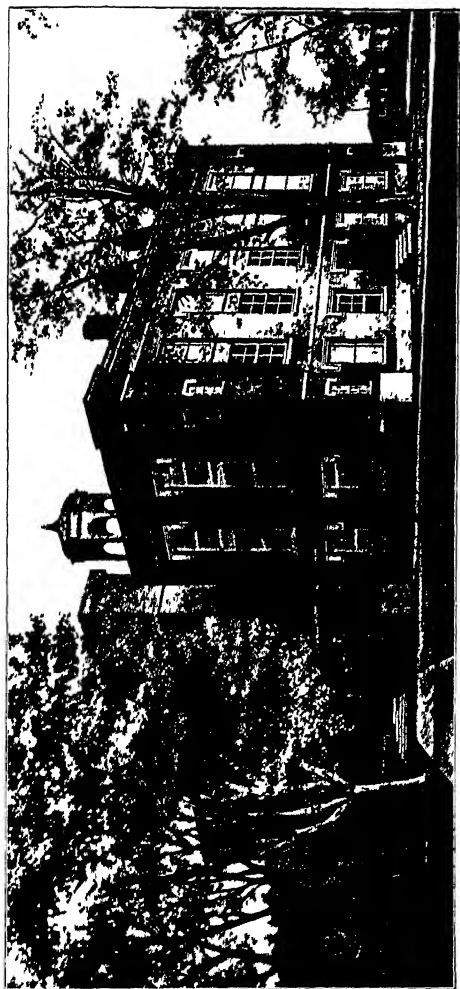
In its review of my *Study of Eugene Field*, in which Mr. Griffin's letter appeared, the *Springfield Republican*, emphasized this view of the phase of Field's New England education in these terms:

Coming East as a boy he received at Amherst and Williamstown and at a private school at Monson the trifling bit of academic education which it then pleased his wild fancy to accept. To his intimate knowledge of New England character is due many of his best pieces of verse, and his residence here was by no means devoid of benefit to him. The lawless, irresponsible boy was forerunner of the man, who to his dying day acknowledged allegiance to no social law, but was ever a law unto himself.

According to Mr. Tufts' memorandum book, Field returned to Monson April 27, 1869, so his ascent of the foothills of Parnassus in the Berkshires covered almost eight months of an impressionable period of his life. Mrs. Tufts' comment on the return of her prodigal was that "He was too smart for the professors at Williams; because they did not understand him, they could not pardon his eccentricities." To her motherly affection, "Eugene was not much of a student, but very much of an irrepressible boy. There was no malice in his pranks, only the inherited disposition to tease somebody and everybody."

Field was not destined to linger long amid the loving surroundings of Monson. On July 5th, 1869, he was summoned to St. Louis by the serious illness of his father, who died just a week later.

Thus ended Eugene's education, so far as it was colored by the environments and instructions of New England.



KNOX COLLEGE, GALESBURG, ILLINOIS

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Thenceforth he was to be a son of the West with an ineradicable tincture of Puritan prejudices and convictions cropping out through everything he did or wrote. Far removed from the Pelham hills, the scent of their winter-greens and wild flowers remained with him to the end.

In the autumn of 1869 Field entered the sophomore class at Knox College, Galesburg, Illinois. This selection was made by Professor John William Burgess, his guardian, who occupied the chair of logic, rhetoric, English literature and political science there. Field cut a more marked swath at Knox than at Williams, although he did not take his educational privileges any more seriously. He exhibited the most perfunctory interest in the lessons and class requirements of the college, and, beyond a little Latin and less Greek and declaiming the good old standbys of English rhetoric, spent most of his spare time plaguing the professors and obstructing the studies of his more serious fellow students.

There are numerous graduates of Knox of the classes from 1872 and the following decade who never meet without recalling the escapades of Eugene Field at and with their Alma Mater. The liberties he took with her would make a racy volume. One of them, now a leading banker at Galesburg, with whom I have exchanged "joyous converse," gives me this interesting sidelight on our genius:

Although four years younger than Field, I knew him intimately and admired him. His interest in early English literature was certainly manifested here, for I have in my library now a copy of Spenser's *Faerie Queene* (then in the Knox College Library) in which Field had underscored and initialed a good many paragraphs that appealed to him, especially if sage advice was given, and closing with the date when he began and finished the book.

When Mr. Finley (J. H.) retired from the presidency of Knox (1899), he asked permission of the Board to withdraw, by substituting other volumes, the volumes of Spenser and the chapel Bible used by Dr. Bateman. The Bible he returned to the college a year ago (1924) and the *Faerie Queene* he presented to me. Finley delights

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in publicly suggesting, whenever he has the opportunity, that I should return the *Faerie Queene* to the college, and it is very apt some time to be done.

I have hunted the attics and cellars all over this town to find a copy of the *Free Press* with an account of the rendition of the cantata of *Esther* given by the Philharmonic Club, an organization mostly of Knox faculty members in 1870, which was reported by Field. As I remember, it described the sensation of the Abingdon people caused by the Knox College faculty arrayed in Oriental costumes. Special mention was made of the shapely shanks of some of the faculty ladies and how the inhabitants fled to the woods but were reassembled and reassured. The concluding paragraph, as I recall it, was: "Emboldened by their success at Abingdon and Kewanee, where the show was also given, it was understood they were planning shortly to produce a cantata to be called *Adam and Eve*, also in original costume."

There can be no mistaking that the Field germ that was to be developed in Denver and Chicago was present in the author's pen in Galesburg. But methinks my friend Lawrence attaches too much importance to Field's lettering in his cherished volume of the *Faerie Queene*. It was a habit Eugene had from his earliest acquaintance with books, and he has doubtless initialed scores of Fox's *Book of Martyrs* without having read one of them. But Field left his mark at Knox, if his sojourn there left little mark on his busy brain.

One year was the limit of Field at Knox, so by the fall of 1870 we find him joining his younger brother, Roswell, in the junior class at the University of Missouri. Of his life in Columbia many stories are told there and throughout Missouri.³ From the historian of the university we have the following outline of the impression the two brothers left on the official recorder of Eugene's third Alma Mater. The records themselves were consumed in the fire of 1892:

Roswell M. Field attended the university from 1868 to 1871 and was a junior when Eugene entered the same class in 1870. I knew both of them well. Eugene was an inattentive, indifferent student, making poor progress in the studies of the course—a genial, sportive,

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song-singing, fun-making companion. Nevertheless he was bright, sparkling, entertaining and a leader among "the boys." In truth he was in intellect above his fellows and a genius along his favorite lines. He was prolific of harmless pranks and his school life was a big joke.

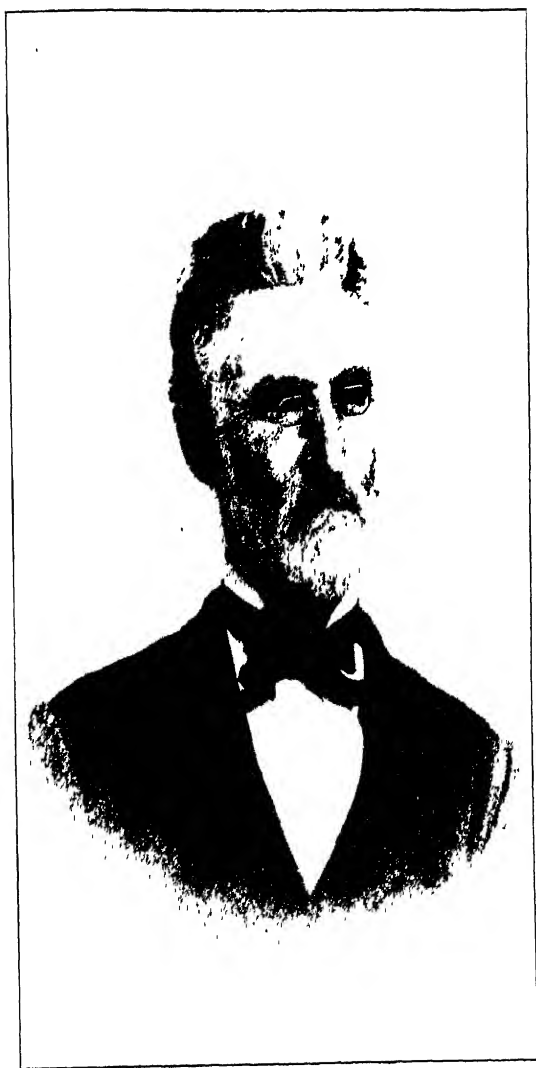
From these brief glimpses of his life in the three colleges in which he spent the better part of three years, the reader will perceive that Eugene Field's education was of the most desultory nature and gave the barest inkling of the interesting place he was to attain in American letters. '1

CHAPTER IV

BETWEEN GRASS AND HAY

HAD Eugene Field's father lived to see his sons graduate, the whole current of Eugene's education and life might have been different. To please and gratify his father, he might have buckled down to his books at Knox or Columbia and been graduated with honors from either college. Once graduated he might have studied law in his father's office, according to that father's wishes. But he was as unlikely material for the bar as could well be imagined. It was not in his nature to argue that the worse was the better side of any proposition. The time-honored jargon of law books and cases was a constant source of merriment and satirical squibs to him throughout his life.

But the death of Roswell M. Field, Sr., shortly after Eugene had returned to Monson from Williamstown, at the age of nineteen, left him free to follow his own inclinations in the matter of a profession. He had to go through the motions of getting a collegiate education before deciding. His father left the two boys what was a moderate fortune for those days, about \$25,000 each—one-fifth of the total estate, or \$12,500, being willed to Mary Field French in recognition of the loving care she had bestowed on the testator's sons. Fortunately for Field, he went from Columbia with his share of his father's estate into the guardianship of his father's executor, Melvin L. Gray, and the watchful care of Mrs. Gray. In their companionship and love he found a home, only second to that with Mary Field French in its influence on the formation of his char-



MELVIN L. GRAY

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acter. In his memorial to Mrs. Gray, written shortly after her death, he thus refers to his taking up his abode in St. Louis:

My acquaintance with Mrs. Gray began in 1871. I was at that time just coming of age, and there were many reasons why I was attracted to the home over which this admirable lady presided. In the first place, Mrs. Gray's household was a counterpart of the household to which my boyhood life in New England has attached me. Again, both Mr. and Mrs. Gray were old friends of my parents; and upon Mr. Gray's accepting the executorship of my father's estate, Mrs. Gray felt, I am pleased to believe, somewhat more than a friendly interest in the two boys, who, coming from rural New England life into the great, strange, fascinating city, stood in need of disinterested friendship and prudent advice. I speak for my brother and myself when I say that for the period of twenty years we found in Mrs. Gray a friend as indulgent, as forbearing, as sympathetic, as kindly suggestive and as disinterested as a mother, and in her home a refuge from temptation, care and vexation.

If further proof were needed of Field's grateful affection for these dear, devoted friends of his youth, it wells up in his dedication of his paraphrase of the Twenty-third Psalm to Mrs. Gray, and of "The Sabine Farm" to Mr. Gray in these lines:

*Come, dear old friend! and with us twain
To calm Digentian groves repair;
The turtle coos his sweet refrain
And posies are a-blooming there,
And there the romping Sabine girls
With myrtle braid their lustrous curls.*

*And lo, sweet friend, behold the cup
Round which the garlands intertwine;
With Massic it is foaming up,
And we would drink to thee and thine;
And of the draught thou shalt partake
Who lov'st us for our father's sake.*

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In the original copy sent to Mr. Gray the sixth line in the first stanza read:

Bind myrtle in their lustrous curls,

which would seem to be the preferable form, as braids and curls do not fraternize even in poetic meter. Field's paraphrase of the Twenty-third Psalm is one of the most perfect versifications of that most beautiful invocation which has inspired the pens of English poets for centuries. Its opening verse reads:

*My Shepherd is the Lord my God—
There is no want I know;
His flock He leads in verdant meads,
Where tranquil waters flow.*

While his father had hoped that Eugene would follow in his footsteps in the wake of Coke, Blackstone and John Marshall, the stage always possessed a fascination for the son. He was a mimic by inheritance, comedian by instinct and habit. Everything queer, whimsical and incongruous appealed to his keen sense of humor. And yet, strange to relate, he first contemplated tragedy as his forte. And yet not so strange, either, for it is a tradition of the stage that comedians seldom die content without having essayed "Hamlet," "King Lear," "Richard III" or "Richelieu." Field had inherited from his father a wonderful voice—deep, sweet, resonant—while he could mold his face at will into every expression of terror, malignity and hate, or contort it into the most mirth-provoking lines of comedy.

As soon as he was master of his own affairs he sought Edwin Forest, the most popular and tremendous tragedian of the day, and laid his ambitious hopes before him. Field approached Forest with natural trepidation and stuttered (he always had a hesitation in his speech) out his request for an opening in Forest's company. The dark-visaged Othello looked the young man over from head to foot and,



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in a voice that thundered through the stage flies, as Field reported the interview, exclaimed:

"Boy! return to your friends and bid them apprentice you to a wood sawyer, rather than waste your life on a precarious profession whose successes are few and whose rewards are bankruptcy and ingratitude. Go! study and learn of Cori-o-la-nus!"

In whatever version Field gave of this interview, the three words, "Boy," "wood sawyer" and "Coriolanus" were mouthed out with a vehemence that would have peeved Hamlet. Eugene did not pursue tragedy further.

Being now convinced that high comedy was his line, Field organized a company in conjunction with his friend Marvin to perform a play that Eugene wrote in which they enacted the heroines and heroes between them; a Madame Saunders was the orchestra and M. Saunders painted the Parisian posters which announced the coming of the "great and only" entertainment. Rehearsals were held in the hotel dining room. The season, confined to such towns in Missouri as Carrollton, Richmond, etc., lasted about two weeks and was what the papers would call a *succès d'estime*, that is, a financial fiasco.

Unabashed as Coriolanus, to whom he had been referred by Forest, who turned his back on the currish ranks of Corioli, so Field turned his back on tragedy and comedy and sought a world elsewhere, and found it in journalism. At Knox, Field had tried his prentice hand at reporting college affairs for the local paper. What he wrote took the liberty with facts that was to distinguish his newspaper writings for two decades. One specimen of this has already been given. His venture on the stage brought him into the companionship of Stanley Waterloo, a well-known story writer of the period, and he was persuaded to try

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reporting by Stanley Huntley of the "Spoopendyke Papers" fame.

But necessity, which is the mother of successful reporters, had not yet crossed Field's path with its urge. When he reached his majority in 1871 he became entitled to share in the distribution of his father's estate, and Mr. Gray, as executor, was induced to sell a part of the real estate. It realized something like \$20,000, of which Eugene's share would have been \$8,000. Possessed of such a sum, a fortune in those days, the world seemingly was his and he determined to see as much of it as the owner of \$8,000 could. At Columbia he had met and become attached to Edgar V. Comstock, the brother of his future wife, whom he had not then seen. To Edgar he broached the idea of a European tour at Field's expense. Barkis was willing. And so in the fall of 1872 the two, against the counsel of Mr. Gray, set out to see the world.

But between leaving Columbia and sailing from New York the unexpected that is always going to happen happened. Edgar Comstock had five sisters, all of them fair to look upon, and the three elders, Misses Ida, Carrie and Georgia, were of the age when young ladies delight to visit their undergraduate brothers at college, where there are always superfluous brothers of other sisters. Misses Julia Sutherland and Gussie Comstock were "o'er young" to leave the parental roof at St. Joseph for the whirling life at Columbia, having not yet donned long dresses, in those days when short skirts were the badge of youth and innocence.

Before parting with Field on Commencement Day the elder Misses Comstock invited him to visit them at Edgar's home in St. Joseph. He accepted the invitation, little thinking what Fate had in store for him. Shortly after returning to St. Louis that same tricky Fate took him by the hand and led him across Missouri to show him, as all good Missourians have to be shown, that happy chance that

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brings lovers from the ends of the earth to know that this is she and he is it. So he went, by hidden hand led to "St. Jo, Buchanan County," three hundred miles away, and there he first met that little "brown-eyed maiden" of his song, the Julia of almost annual valentines, that ran the gamut of grave and gay for a score of years, the heroine of frequent drives. How his thoughts harked back from grim old London in 1889 to "Lovers Lane, St. Jo."

*St. Jo, Buchanan County,
Is leagues and leagues away;
And I sit in the gloom of this rented room
And pine to be there today.*

*I would have a brown-eyed maiden
Go driving once again;
And I'd sing the song, as we snailed along,
That I sung to that maiden then.*

*Ah! sweet the hours of springtime,
When the heart inclines to woo,
And it's deemed all right for the callow youth
To do what he ought to do.*

While Julia's mature sisters were thinking how kind it was of Eugene to take so much interest in a mere chit of a child, the long afternoon drives down Lovers Lane ran swiftly to the old inevitable end. It was quickly a case of the youth of twenty-one laying his life and fortune at the feet of a maid still two years short of the traditional "sweet sixteen." Eugene lost no time in making his hopes and wishes known, not only to Mistress Julia but to her incredulous family. While they hesitated she never doubted that she had met her mate. They expostulated and protested that Julia was but a child. Field waved the objection aside with the indisputable "What of it? She will outgrow that." He pleaded for an immediate marriage but was forced to accept her father's postponement until

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Julia was eighteen, which must have seemed like an eternity to the impetuous youth, who finally consented with secret reservations. In his *Auto-Analysis*, Field says: "I favor early marriages," and at twenty-one he certainly did, and it was in no contented mood that he turned away from St. Jo for the proposed trip to Europe.

In that same *Auto-Analysis* Field writes: "In 1872 I visited Europe, spending six months and my patrimony in France, Italy, Ireland and England." There is a pretty story told by his sister-in-law, Mrs. Ida Comstock Below, in her brochure "Eugene Field in his Home," that, after all the arrangements were made for his European trip, and he and Edgar and Miss Ida Comstock had reached New York, she and her brother were amazed to get a note from him by mail saying, "Important business has called me back to St. Joseph; I hope you will pardon my sudden leave taking." They had no trouble guessing the nature of his important business, and had to wait patiently while Eugene posted fifteen hundred miles and back barely in time to catch their steamer.

The ardent lover and youthful spendthrift and his companion landed in Ireland, crossed the Channel to England and by slow and extravagant stages reached Italy, taking in the principal cities and sights en route. About the only letters that reached America from Field during this European trip (excepting those by every mail steamer addressed to St. Joseph, Mo., U. S. A.) were written with business-like brevity to Melvin L. Gray for additional funds for the expedition. Before the travelers had reached Italy the stringency of travel had become too severe to wait on the mails, and the cable was resorted to to impress Mr. Gray with the immediateness of their impecuniosity. In order to relieve this Mr. Gray was forced to discount the notes for the deferred payments on the sale of the Field real estate. When the tourists reached Naples, they were met with the chilling cable notice, "No funds available." A

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passing glimpse of how Field "did Europe" is found in a letter written to a friend in New York state dated at Rome February 22, 1873. In this he says:

We have been two months in Nice, and a month or so traveling in Italy. Two weeks we passed in Naples, and a most delightful place we found it. . . . I climbed Vesuvius and peered cautiously into the crater. It was a glorious sight. Nothing else like it in the world! Such a glorious smell of Brimstone! Such enlivening whiffs of hot steam and sulphuric fumes! Then, too, the grand veil of impenetrable white smoke that hung over the yawning abyss! No wonder people rave about this crater, and no wonder Pliny lost his life in coming too near the fascinating monster. The ascent of Vesuvius is no mean undertaking and I advise all American parents to train their children especially for it, by drilling them daily upon their back-yard ash-heaps. I was an hour climbing up the cone, which cannot be more than fifteen hundred feet. . . . Coming down the mountain is rare fun. The sand and ashes are so deep that the descent may be made upon a dead run. Clad in old garments and with my pedal extremities encased in my "monitor gaiters," I astonished the natives by my celerity and recklessness. I was much disappointed in Pompeii.

This letter is valuable as a specimen of Field's style at twenty, but more as an account of the most strenuous exercise he ever took, if he ever took it except from an easy chair on the veranda of a neighboring villa. If Field had visited Vesuvius in 1880 he could have reached the summit by the funicular railway without the aid of a guidebook. Perhaps his experience at Vesuvius gave emphasis to the "I dislike all exercise" of his *Auto-Analysis*.

But there was nothing about the ascent and descent of Vesuvius to try his tourist soul as did the return trip from Italy after receiving that "No funds available" notice at Naples. And yet he took it in the day's tramp with a spirit worthy of Mark Twain or Mark Tapley. On their care-free outward journey, the travelers had happily invested in many rare and valuable articles of vertu, as souvenirs of the lands they visited. These by sale or pledge furnished

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the wherewithal to pave the way for their return to America with their purses empty but with an inexhaustible fund of adventures. Arrived at New York Field promptly got in touch with Mr. Gray and out of the funds furnished, after buying the necessary transportation to St. Louis, invested the surplus in a French poodle, which he carried home as a memento of his visit to Paris.

Years afterward I remember being with Field when he opened an express package containing a unique watch, which for more than a decade had been an unredeemed witness to his glorious entry into and embarrassed exit from Naples or Florence—I forget which.

And now we come to the most important milepost in Eugene Field's life. It had little to do in changing his nature or character. These were fixed by heredity at his birth and by the environment of his bringing up. As he was at Amherst, Monson, Williamstown, Knox and Columbia, so he was when he sailed for Europe and returned to St. Louis, except in the resolve to marry Miss Julia Sutherland Comstock. In this he was adamant. When Eugene took steamer for Europe it was understood that his term of waiting for his Rachel was to be four years and that another condition of his probation was that he should become established in business. When he returned from Europe his only business engagement was to get married and to that business he stuck in spite of all impediments. His first business was to get an abridgment of his term of waiting, without any such miscue as attended the courtship of Jacob; and his persistence prevailed, so that Eugene Field and Julia Sutherland Comstock were duly wed at St. Joseph on October 16th, 1873, when, in the laconic comment of the *Analysis*, the bride "at that time was a girl of sixteen."

That there was no repenting at leisure over these seeming hasty vows may be judged from the following stanzas dated appropriately on St. Valentine's day, 1887, reciting in rhyme the joys that followed the wedding in St. Jo:



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*What though these years of ours be fleeting,
What though the years of youth be flown?
I'll mock Old Tempus with repeating:
"I love my love and her alone."*

*And when I fall before his reaping,
And when my stuttering speech is dumb,
Think not my love is dead or sleeping,
But that it waits for you to come.*

Field, artist that he was, took infinite pains in the composition of this valentine. It is one of the few poems of his of which I have two manuscripts—one in script, the other in typewriting signed with his exquisite signature and dated. The script copy is written with old English spelling, which he delighted in about that time.

Throughout his life Field rarely missed the opportunity on the fourteenth of February to remember some young damsel with a valentine in his inevitable script like that illustrated on the next page to the little daughter of our friend Walter C. Larned of Lake Forest, Illinois, and entitled "To Elsie: A Valentine."

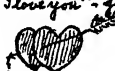
A benedict at twenty-three, Field was not quite ready to settle down. There was still a small balance of his patrimony left and so the young couple decided to spend it and their honeymoon in the East. Field took special delight in showing his bride the wonders of New York and in keeping her in a perpetual state of protest at his practical jokes. She never to his dying day knew what was coming next. He sought to make her at home at Delmonico's by ordering "boiled pig's feet à la St. Jo," in a stentorian voice that tested the gravity of the best-trained waiters in the world, and evoked from Mrs. Field that "Oh, Eugene" that was to be the feminine accompaniment to his boyish pranks throughout their married life. She never failed to fall for the jokes he delighted to play on his best friends, and forgave to his humor and wit what would have been insufferable from a churl.

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By the time his wedding trip was over Field's ready funds were exhausted and to supply his current expenses Mr. Gray had to mortgage the balance of his father's es-

Your gran'ma in her youth was quite
as little a little maid as you
and though her hair is now white
her eyes still have this maiden blue,
and on her cheeks as fair as thine
shadows a girl's blush would glow.
If you recalled the valentine
She got, oh! many years ago.

A valorous youth loved Gracie there
And wooed her in that old lang syne;
'Twas first he told his secret when
He sent the maid that valentiner
No perfumed paper nor what of gold
Was that first hint of love to send;
But with his secret grace he told —
"I love you" — Gracie was content.



To ask your gramma, if you will,
If, though her head be bowed and gray,
If, though her feeble pulses chide,
True love abideth not for aye.

By that quaint portrait on the wall
That smiles upon her from above,
She thinks your grown-up will recall
The sweet dimly of love.

Near there, here's no trace of gold -
 A sheet ~~with~~ ^{embroidered} with cunning art -
 Next here's the solemn pledge of old:
 "I love you, love, with all my heart!"
 And if in what I said you here
 You find not all of love expressed,
 So, go to grandma, there dear,
 And she will tell you all the rest!



TO ELSIE: A VALENTINE

tate. When the loans fell due there were no funds to pay them nor equity in the land to justify their renewal. So they were foreclosed and bid in by Mr. Gray who still held them when last heard from.

BETWEEN GRASS AND HAY

Eugene's brother Roswell tells an interesting story of how their father's land speculation went out of sight in the mutations that befell outlying real estate. In the year before his death, Roswell Sr. took Roswell Jr. for a drive in the district south of St. Louis. Pointing to the property, he said: "Rosy, hold on to your Carondelet property. In fifteen years it will be worth half a million dollars, and very likely a million and a half." That was fifty-seven years ago, when the Carondelet iron furnaces were in full blast and St. Louis was stretching southward. In 1869, the year of Roswell Sr.'s death, the property was appraised at \$125. A panic came and changed the direction of civic extension to the west, leaving Carondelet to bake in the sun on the wrong side of a slough up to the time Roswell Jr. told the story in 1900. This was as near as Eugene and his brother Rose ever came to being real estate millionaires.

CHAPTER V

KNOCKING AT THE GATE

IT was now time for Field to put away boyish things, think as a man, and look the future in the face. Light-hearted he prepared to face that future, and a light heart was destined to carry him far, for it was out of that light heart he coined such success and fame as he achieved—a fame that has endured a third of a stirring century prone to forgetfulness and ever asking for something new—in a world distracted by a war more terrific than any other conflict in its history.

At the risk of some repetition I am permitted to quote here some notes prepared by Eugene Field's lifelong friend, William C. Buskett, the hero of his "Penn Yan Bill," to whom Field dedicated "Casey's Table d'Hôte," the lead-off poem in *A Little Book of Western Verse*. Under date of 1900 Mr. Buskett writes:

My association with Eugene Field began in St. Louis, Mo., in 1872. We had a little circle of friends that was surely to be envied in that we were fond of each other and our enjoyment was pure and genuine. In 1875 we formed what was known as the "Arion Quartette," composed of Thomas C. Crawford, now clerk in the U. S. Circuit Court in St. Louis, Thomas C. Baker (deceased), Roswell Martin Field, a brother of Eugene, and myself. 'Gene (as he was always called by his intimates) did not sing in the quartette, although he had a good voice. We frequently gave entertainments, at which Eugene was always the center of attraction. The "Old Sexton" was his favorite song. He was a great mimic and tease, and was always bubbling over with fun. At that time he was living on Adams Street, and many of these entertainments were given at his house. His household then consisted of himself, wife and baby "Trotty," the pet name given his eldest daughter, Mary French Field, and with them Mrs. Com-

KNOCKING AT THE GATE

stock, mother of Mrs. Field, Edgar V. and Misses Carrie, Georgia and Gussie Comstock, a delightful family.

There was a genuine bond of friendship among us all then, for we were comparatively oblivious to care and trouble. We were all poor, you may say, earning reasonable salaries, but that never seemed to worry us much. If one had a dollar we would always divide, and the crowd was never a cent ahead, but we defied misfortune.

Among the pranks that Eugene used to play upon his wife in those days was that of appearing at some of our rehearsals on a warm evening in a costume that never failed to tease her. He would walk into the parlor and say: "Well, boys, let us take off our coats and take it easy; it's too hot." We would all proceed to do so. When Eugene would remove his coat he would display a red flannel undershirt, having pinned his cuffs to his coat sleeves and his necktie and collar to his shirt. He placed no limit on his humor.

Who of those at all intimate with Field will forget the enjoyment he took in trolling forth, in a quaint, quavering, cracked, yet tuneful voice, one stanza of "Ossian's Serenade":

*I'll chase the antelope over the plain,
The tiger's cub I'll bind with a chain,
The wild gazelle with its silvery feet
I'll give to thee as a playmate, sweet.
Then come with me in my light canoe,
While the sea is calm and the sky is blue,
For I'll not linger another day
For storms may rise and love decay.*

This verse was a snatch that lingered in Field's memory from the old days in Adams Street, where he first caught it from the lips of Mr. Buskett, in whose family it had been an heirloom. Field finally traced it to its source through sporadic letters written to himself printed in his "Sharps and Flats" column in the *Chicago Record*.

These care-free days to which Mr. Buskett testifies were passed in St. Louis after Field's return from a brief experience as city editor of the *St. Joseph Gazette* in 1875. The date is fixed by the presence of "Trotty" in the gypsy circle,

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who was the most important news item he "managed to acquire" in the days whereof he wrote:

*Oh, many a peck of apples and of peaches did I get
When I helped 'em run the local on the "St. Jo Gazette."*

Associated with Field on the *Gazette* was Henry W. Burke, subsequently a judge of a state court. Burke had been assigned to write up a "swell society event." Nearly all the prominent people were present and, as the custom was, the names of all were obtained for publication. Burke's story of the affair gushed through a full column and, as it passed under Field's editorial pencil, at the end of the list of those present he added, "and last but not least the handsome and talented society editor of the *Gazette*, H. W. Burke."

After "whooping up locals on the *St. Jo Gazette*" for a few months, Field returned to St. Louis in the spring of 1876, where he became an editorial writer on the *Times-Journal* of that city, and resumed the semi-bohemian life as described by Mr. Buskett. It was here that he adopted as a snaffle to his spendthrift propensity, the practice of making his weekly stipend payable to Mrs. Field. Before he evolved the scheme of cajoling the cashier out of the "usual V" or the "necessary X" for the week-end pocket money, his father's executor, Mr. Gray, was made to play the part of his "Angel," and countless and touching were the weekly appeals he made to that generous soul who could deny him nothing. One of Field's most effective methods of obtaining the "needful" from Mr. Gray was the threat of going on the stage under the assumed name of Melvin L. Gray. On one occasion when he met with a seemingly unrelenting refusal, Field calmly remarked: "Very well, if you cannot make such a paltry advance out of my estate, I shall be compelled to go on the variety stage. But as I cannot keep my own name I will take yours and shall have lithographs struck off at once reading, "To-night, M. L.

KNOCKING AT THE GATE

Benjo and Specialty Artist." As Mr. Gray was never so sure that the mad wag would not carry out his threat for the mere fun of it, he advanced the needed funds and the immediate stringency went over for another week.

But gossip with her envious tongue seized upon this playful sacrifice of Field's and distorted it into a scandalous attack the publication of which cut him deeply. Shortly after he had left St. Louis for Denver, the *Spectator*, a weekly paper of the former city, made his departure the occasion for printing the following semi-serious, semi-facetious, wholly gratuitous, send-off:

One of the cleverest young journalists of this city, a few years ago, was Mr. Eugene Field, whose charming short poems and witty paragraphs still occasionally find their way into our paper from Denver, where he is now located. Mr. Field was the happy possessor of one of those sunny dispositions which is thoroughly antagonistic to trouble of every description; he absolutely refused to entertain the black demon under any pretext whatever, and after spending a small fortune with the easy grace of a prince, he settled down to doing without one with equal grace and nonchalance, in a manner more creditable to himself than satisfying to his creditors. Did his hatter or tailor present an untimely bill, the gay debonair Eugene would scribble on the back thereof an impromptu rhyme expressive of his deep regret at not being able to offer the cash instead, and return the same with an airy grace that the renowned J. Wilkins Micawber himself might have envied.

While the intellectual prominences upon the cranium of our friend and fellow-citizen had been well looked to, Dame Nature totally neglected to develop his bump of veneration; age possessed no qualities, wealth and position no prerogatives, which this singularly constituted young man felt bound to respect. When his father's executor, an able and exceedingly dignified member of the St. Louis bar, would refuse to respond to his frequent demands for money advances, the young reprobate would coolly elevate his heels to a point in dangerous proximity to the old gentleman's nose, and threaten to go upon the stage, taking his guardian's honored name as a stage pseudonym and representing himself to be his son. This threat generally sufficed to bring the elder gentleman to terms, as he knew his charge's ability to execute as well as threaten.

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He was an inveterate joker, and his tendency to break out without regard to fitness of time or place into some mad prank made him almost a terror to his friends. On one occasion he informed a young lady friend that he did not think he would be able to come to her wedding because he had a terrible toothache. "Then why not have your tooth pulled out?" said the young lady. "I never thought of that," quoth Eugene gravely. "I guess I will." When the wedding day arrived, among the other bridal gifts came a small box bearing Mr. Field's card, and reposing on a velvet cushion inside was the identical tooth which the bride had advised him to have extracted, and in the cavity where had once throbbed the agonizing nerve was neatly stuffed a fifty dollar bill.

The recollection of the many amazing traits and freaks of this versatile genius affords amusement to the innumerable friends of his to this day. But time, which sobers us all, has doubtless taken some of the foam and sparkle from this rare spirit, although it would be hard to convince his friends that he will ever be anything but the gay and debonair Eugene.

Although time and domestic responsibilities and bodily infirmities in later years did their best or worst to sober the spirits of Eugene Field, they could not change his nature or tame his irrepressible disposition to tease and tantalize friend and foe alike, as the reader will learn as he accompanies him through these pages. The incredulous will be interested to know that Mr. Gray confirms the general accuracy of the story of the strange wedding present with its costly filling, and preserved among the most cherished mementoes of his ward Field's prompt repudiation of that paragraph above, charging him with disrespect for one from whom he had received every evidence of affection, is the following letter:

DENVER, June 25, 1883

DEAR MR. GRAY:

A copy of last Saturday's *St. Louis Spectator* has just arrived and I am equally surprised, pained and indignant to find in it a personal article about myself which represents me in the untruthful light of having been disrespectful and impudent to you. I believe you will bear me out when I say that my conduct towards

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you has upon all occasions been respectful and gentlemanly. I may not have been able to repay you the many obligations you have placed me under, but I have always regarded you with feelings of affectionate gratitude and I am deeply distressed lest the article referred to may create a widely different impression. Of course it makes no difference to you, but as gratitude is about all I have in the world to bestow on those who are good and kind to me, it is not right that I should be advertised—even in a joking way—as an ingrate.

Yours sincerely,
EUGENE FIELD

Field's reference to gratitude as the one asset he possessed for repaying the obligations of friendship may be matched with Theodore Tilton's celebrated utterance: "I owe no man anything except that debt of gratitude man ought to owe." Ingratitude is that "damned sin" for which no real man will stand. As for Field's airy way of standing off importunate creditors, I have reason to believe that the rhymes on the backs of their bills were accepted as more than the equivalent of the dollars and cents on their faces.

Two sons were born to Field during the second period of his life in St. Louis—Melvin G., named after the "dear Mr. Gray" of the above letter from Denver, and Eugene Jr., who was nicknamed "Pinny," abbreviated from the Gilbert and Sullivan opera "Pinafore," at the height of its popularity at that time. The fact that Melvin, of all Field's children, was never to bear some fanciful pet name may be credited as a tribute to the high respect and love the father felt for the boy's godfather.

It was from the midst of the fun and frolic, the song and jollity, of this period that Field showed the first signs of a pure vein of sentiment that, linked to a command of pure English and an exquisite ear for rhythm, was to be the sesame of his life work. Written in his own beautiful script in a presentation manuscript copy of the cream of his verse written before 1888, I find this note:

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"Note D: The first piece of serious verse I ever wrote. It was printed in the St. Louis *Morning Journal*, December 25, 1878. I regard it as one of my best pieces of work."

Whether Field's judgment is sound or not, the fact that "The Christmas Treasures" is the earliest specimen of his acknowledged verse, and that it has been preserved in his own handwriting, entitles it to be reproduced here:

THE CHRISTMAS TREASURES

*I count my treasures o'er with care—
The little toy that baby knew,
The little sock of faded hue,
The little lock of golden hair.*

*Long years ago this Christmas time,
My little one, my all to me—
Sat robed in white upon my knee
And heard the merry Christmas chime.*

*"Tell me,—my little golden head,
If Santa Claus should come tonight,
What shall he bring my baby bright—
What treasure for my boy?" I said.*

*And then he named the little toy,
While in his round and mournful eyes
There came a look of sweet surprise
That spoke his trustful, quiet joy.*

*And as he lisped his evening pray'r,
He asked the boon with childish grace
And toddled to the chimney place
And hung his little stocking there.*

*That night, as lengthening shadows crept,
I saw the white wing'd angels come
With heavenly music to our home
And kiss my darling as he slept.*

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*They must have heard his baby pray'r—
For in the morn with anxious face
He toddled to the chimney place
And found the little treasure there.*

*They came again one Christmas tide—
That angel host, so fair and white,
And singing all the Christmas night
They lured my darling from my side.*

*A little sock, a little toy,
A little lock of golden hair,
The Christmas music on the air—
A watching for my baby boy.*

*But if again that angel train
And golden head come back to me,
To bear me to eternity,
My watching will not be in vain.*

1878

Thus as early as 1878 was struck the note that for the next seventeen years was to ring out true and clear whenever that blessed season rolls around, when

*The nights are wholesome; then no planets strike,
No fairy takes, nor witch hath power to harm,
So hallow'd and so gracious is the time.*

Time mellowed his fancy and perfected his style, but the germ is here of "Little Boy Blue," "Krinken," "Wynkin, Blynkin and Nod" and the countless lullabies that came from Field's prolific pen. They were all children of his fancy and had no special relation to the little flock which was completed for a time by the birth of a third boy at Kansas City, whither the family had moved in 1880. This youngest newcomer was christened Frederick, and was promptly nicknamed "Daisy" because his father one day

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chanced to fancy that his two eyes looked like daisies peering up at him from the grass.

Field was progressing rapidly in his chosen profession when at the age of thirty he went to Kansas City to assume the managing editorship of the *Times* of that town, then a place of 55,000 inhabitants, just the size for the style of journalism Field carried under his 7¾ hat. Here the family lived in a rented house, which same became the rendezvous for all the happy-hearted members of the newspaper and theatrical professions, that enlivened life in Kansas City in those free and halcyon days—not to mention the nights “devoid of ease.”

Perhaps I cannot do better than introduce here the following lines from a manuscript poem written some five years later, that gives a more or less faithful résumé of the life led by the Field household about this period:

THE GOOD KNIGHT AND HIS LADY

*Soothly there was no lady faire
In all the province could compare
With Lady Julia Field,
The noble knight's most beauteous wife,
For whom at any time his life
He would righte gladly yield.*

*'Twas at a tourney at St. Joe
The good knight met her first; I trow,
And was enamoured straight;
And in less time than you could say
A pater noster he did pray
Her to become his mate.*

*And from the time she won his heart,
She sweetly played her wifely part—
Contented with her lot!
And tho the little knightly horde
Came faster than they could afford,
The good wife grumbled not.*

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*But when arrived a prattling son
She simply said, "God's will be done—
This babe shall give us joy!"
And when a little girl appeared,
The good wife quoth: "'Tis well—I feared
'Twould be another boy."*

*She leased her castle; by the year—
Her tables groaned with sumptuous cheer,
As epicures all say;
She paid her bills on Tuesdays, when
On Monday nights that best of men—
Her husband—drew his pay.*

*And often when the good Knight craved
A dime wherewith he might get shaved,
She doled him out the same;
For these and other generous deeds
The good and honest Knight must needs
Have loved the kindly dame.*

*At all events he never strayed
From those hymeneal vows he made
When their two loves combined;
A matron more discreet than she
Or husband more devote than he
It would be hard to find.*

July 4, 1885.

There is no need of the date to tell the Field student that this was written long after the period to which it relates in his domestic history. Beyond that it was written during the period when Field was a most assiduous experimenter with the archaic old English, I cannot recall the circumstances that provoked it. Nothing similar to it exists among my many Field manuscripts. His bibliomaniac admirers may be interested to know that the paper bore the watermark of 1879 and was written on both sides—something unusual with Field—for he seldom economized in

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that direction. Howsoever it came to be written, Field's "Good Knight and His Lady" gives a truer picture of his home relations than is to be found in any other thing that has been preserved respecting them. That it was prepared with loving care is attested by several interlineations in ink, sealed by a blot of his favorite red ink on the corner, which for a wonder does not bear the earmarks of the deliberation with which he frequently embellished his neatest manuscripts.

Thus we have disposed for the time being of Field's early experiences in married life, resulting, as told, in four "hostages to fortune," of whom we shall hear more as the narrative proceeds. In the meantime he was having a series of adventures in journalism that led him by easy stages from St. Louis to St. Joseph and back again. Throughout this period neither as reporter nor editor did Eugene Field give evidence of special qualifications for his chosen profession. The serious business of news gathering bored him. He interlarded his interviews with extraneous flights of fancy that enlivened the copy and invited libel suits, which came to naught, because few lawyers care to sue a joke and catch a crab. When he was assigned to Jefferson City to "do" the Missouri State Legislature for the *St. Louis Journal*, what that newspaper got was not a summary of legislative proceedings, but a running fire of squibs at the expense of state officials and legislators. His most prolific source of items was the all-night sessions after adjournment attended by those choice spirits that infest the floors and lobbies of state legislatures from Augusta, Maine, to Sacramento. Here Field gleaned those rich stores of anecdote and character studies which later were to make him the most entertaining guest at any party where he chose to let "sweet Fancy loose."

While there was little about his work at this time that gave promise of anything beyond the facility to turn a rhyme or barb a seemingly innocuous paragraph, it is pos-

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sible, looking back, to detect something of the flavor of the subtle drollery that persisted to his last printed work. For instance, the following, published in the *St. Louis Journal*, continues to go the rounds as these pages are written:

THE NEW BABY

*We welcome thee, eventful morn,
Since to the poet there is born
A son and heir;
A fuzzy babe of rosy hue,
And staring eyes of misty blue,
Sans teeth, sans hair.*

*Let those who know not wedded joy
Revile this most illustrious boy—
This genial child!
But let the brother poets raise
Their songs and chant their sweetest lays
To him reviled.*

*Then strike, O bards, your tuneful lyres,
Awake, O rhyming souls, your fires,
And use no stent!
Bring forth the festive syrup cup—
Fill every loyal beaker up
With peppermint!*

It was during his earlier connection with the *Journal* that Field was assigned the duty of accompanying Carl Schurz on his stumping tour of Missouri in 1874 as a candidate for reelection to the United States Senate. Naturally Field regarded the swing around the state, listening at every stop to Mr. Schurz's repetition of the same old story, as a great lark and was very sparing of the truth as to its effect upon the voters. The character of his reports may be judged by Mr. Schurz's only remonstrance: "Field, why will you lie so outrageously?" Once when a party of German-

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Americans appeared at the hotel where the campaigners were stopping, intent on serenading their illustrious compatriot, before Mr. Schurz had completed his toilet Field stepped out on the veranda and, waving the raucous band to silence, made bold to address the crowd in broken English. At first he was greeted with cheers, which quickly changed to an amazed silence as he proceeded to regale their ears with a jargon of political platitudes in a deep guttural dialect. Fortunately for Field the real orator of the day appeared and pushed him aside, before the outraged crowd had time to realize and resent Field's broken English with a broken head.

On another occasion when there was a momentary delay on the part of the gentleman who was to introduce Mr. Schurz, Field stepped to the front and, with a broad German accent addressed the assemblage as follows:

"Ladies und Shentlemen: I haf such a pad colt dot it vas not bossible for me to make you a speedg to-night, but I haf die bleasure to introduce to you my prilliant chournalist friend Euchene Fielt, who vill spoke to you in my blace."

It was all done so quickly and seriously that the joke was complete before Mr. Schurz pushed himself to the center of the stage and was recognized as the speaker of the evening, and a most effective campaign speaker he was. A common love of music was the only bond that made Field tolerable to his serious-minded elder.

About the time that Field was coming to the surface of newspaper fame, the horizon of literary prominence in the United States was pretty nearly monopolized by a coterie of Eastern writers consisting of Henry James, William Dean Howells, Charles Dudley Warner, and Thomas Bailey Aldrich. In a sphere below these literary dictators of the day moved a merry band of paragraphers, who fifty years ago made the reputation of such newspapers as the *Burling-*

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ton *Hawkeye*, the *Detroit Free Press*, the *Oil City Derrick*, the *Danbury News* and the *Cincinnati Saturday Night* household words throughout the republic. Their squibs and sallies "shooting folly as it flew" were quoted throughout the Union, being added to by each wit in the process of reproduction in the exchanges. One would hit on a happy thought and it would be started on the reciprocal round, gathering spicy comment as it went, like a snowball. Before Field left St. Louis his "Funny Fancies," as his quips in the *Times-Journal* were called, had gained him admission into the newspaper merry-go-round.

It was during this period that Field was moved at Christmas time to write his "Christmas Treasures" quoted on another page. Referring to this in his *Auto-Analysis* he said:

"I wrote and published my first bit of verse in 1879. It was entitled 'Christmas Treasures' (see *A Little Book of Western Verse*). Just ten years later I began to write verse very frequently."

This indicates what little track Field kept of when or where he wrote the verse by which he was to be remembered. His best verse was to be written and published between 1879 and 1889. Such immortals as "Little Boy Blue," "Krinken," "Wynken, Blynken and Nod" (originally entitled a "Dutch Lullaby"), "Marthy's Yountket," "Casey's Table d'Hôte," and "Our Two Opinions," to say nothing of a score of others, all appear in the *Little Book of Western Verse* published in 1889. Field's fecundity in the preceding decade seemed to know no limit.

It was early in this period that Field wrote "The Little Peach," which is a close second in popularity to his "Little Boy Blue." Of this, in an appendix to a facsimile copy of his verse written prior to 1887, he wrote:

"Note B: Originally printed in the *Kansas City Times*. Recited publicly by Henry E. Dixey, John A. Mackey, Sol

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Smith Russell and almost every comedian in America. Popular but rotten."

Which shows how unjust an author can be to the child of his own fancy. "The Little Peach" is in no sense a poetic gem of purest ray serene. It rather belongs to a lowlier strata of the vegetable kingdom, but it has proved itself a hardy perennial, having survived about as harsh usage as ever befell verse finding its way into the repertory of "almost every comedian in America." Fortunately it fell into the hands of several artists besides those mentioned above who recognized its intrinsic worth. One of these, Francis Wilson, whom Field once named as "one he loved the best," in his *Life of Himself*, records how he first became acquainted with "The Little Peach" and its author.

Harry Hamlin [writes Mr. Wilson], son of the theatre manager, John Hamlin of Chicago, brought Field one night behind the scenes of the Grand Opera House and introduced him. I was playing there in an operetta called "Nadjy," in which I sang a quaint poem written by Field and called "A Little Peach in an Orchard Grew." At the time I did not know, strangely enough, that Field had written it. A very dear friend, Hubbard T. Smith, connected with diplomatic life in Washington, had composed a bewitching melody for it, also not knowing of Field's authorship. Smith had found the verses, unsigned, in the corner of a country newspaper. My own acquaintance with the composition had come about through hearing it sung at a Lambs' Gambol, by Sidney Drew.

On a trip to Europe I came across "The Little Peach" again in sheet music form, with both words and music credited to someone else! Bringing a copy home, I had John Braham, nephew of David Braham, of Harrigan and Hart fame, compose a dance for it. Arranging it as a duet, Marie Jansen and I interpolated it with marked favor into "Nadjy," and, later, carried it over into "The Oolah," the play in which I first disported myself as a star." . . .

Field gave the poem as a recitation in public and in private and, according to Mr. Wilson, revised his adverse

*
The Little Peach.
 x

A little peach in the orchard grew -
 A little peach of emerald hue;
 Warmed by the sun and wet by the dew,
 It grew.

One day, walking that orchard through
 The little peach dawned on the view
 Of Johnnie Jones and his sister Sue
 Those two.

Up at the peach a club they threw -
 Down from the stem on which it grew
 Fell the little peach of emerald hue -
 Too true!



John took a bite and Sue took a chew,
 And then her trouble began to brew -
 Trouble the doctors could not subdue -
 Paregoric too.

Under the turf where the daisies grew
 They planted John and his sister Sue,
 And their little souls to the angels flew -
 Boo hoo!

Was't of the peach of emerald hue,
 Warmed by the sun and wet by the dew?
 Ah, well - its mission on earth is through -
 Adieu!

x

* See Appendix "B"

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pronouncement concerning it. Singularly enough Mr. Wilson, generally so accurate in his notes regarding Field's writings, speaks of "The Little Peach" as an amplification of the following paragraph in the *Denver Tribune Primer* in 1882:

The Peach is Hard and Green. He is Waiting for a Child to Come along and eat him. When he gets into the Child's little Stomach he will Make things Hot for that Child. The Child who Eats the Peach will be an Angel before he Gets a Chance to Eat another. If there were No Green Peaches there would not be so many Children's Sizes of Gold Harps in Heaven.

Instead of "The Little Peach" being an amplification of this characteristic *Denver Tribune Primer* paragraph, if there was any connection the relationship must have been in the reverse order, for "The Little Peach" dates back to Field's earlier employment on the *Kansas City Times*.

That Field thought more highly or at least more fondly of this vagrant child of his elfish fancy than his written dictum, is proved by the pains he took in the very work containing it to reproduce the poem in two different versions. The first follows the accepted form of 1880 in four different colored inks—red, green, brown and black—illustrated with a very green little peach with three leaves on the margin; the other version, a beautiful specimen of its author's delightful eccentricity, reproducing the poem in Greek characters, only the title had to be changed to "The Pear," there being no equivalent for "ch" in the Greek alphabet. Only reproduction in facsimile can do this work of art justice.

In order that the reader may appreciate the variation from the popular "Little Peach" caused by the exigencies of the Greek characters, a translation back into the vernacular of "The Pear" is subjoined:

Ἦν Π_εαρ.

Α λίττελε πεαρ ἰν α γαρδεν γρνε -
 Α λίττελε πεαρ οφ εμεραλδ 'νε -
 Κίσοεδ βι Ἦν συν ανδ βαδεδ βι Ἦν δνε;
 Ἰε γρνε.

Ονε δα, γοῖνγ δατ γαρδεν Ἦρο;
 Δατ λίττελε πεαρ καμε το Ἦν φνε
 Οφ δομας δινδ ανδ 'ις σιστερ δνε -
 Δοσε του!

Υη ατ Ἦν πεαρ α κλυβ δα Ἦρνε -
 Δοντ φραμ Ἦν στεμ ον 'νιχ' ιε γρνε
 Φελλ Ἦν λίττελε πεαρ οφ εμεραλδ 'νε -
 Πεκ-α-βοο!

Τομ τοοκ ωβιτε ανδ δνε τοοκ ονε τοο,
 Ανδ δαν Ἦν φρουβλε βεγατ το βρνε -
 Τρουβλε Ἦν δοκτορς κουλδν'ε ουβδνε -
 Τοο τρνε! [Παραγορικ, τοο.(?)

Ντρερ Ἦν τρεφ φαρν Ἦν δαίσις γρνε
 Δα πλαντεδ Τομ ανδ 'ις σιστερ δνε,
 Ανδ δειρ λιττελε σουλς το Ἦν αγγελς φλνε -
 Βοο-'οο!

Βνε ας το Ἦν πεαρ οφ εμεραλδ 'νε,
 Κίσοεδ βι Ἦν συν ανδ βαδεδ βι Ἦν δνε,
 Ἰ'λλ αδδ δατ ιετς μισσιον ον εαρδ' ις Ἦρο -
 Αδιν!

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THE PEAR

(In English equivalent)

*A little pear in a garden grue,
A little pear of emerald 'ue,
Kissed bi the sun and bathed bi the due
It grew.*

*One da, going that garden thro'
That little pear came to the vue
Of Thomas Smith and 'is sister Sue,
Those too!*

*Up at the pear a klub tha thrue,
Down from the stem on 'uikh it grue
Fell the little pear of emerald 'ue,
Peek-a-bool!*

*Tom took a bite and Sue took one too,
And then the trouble began to brue,
Trouble the doktors kouldn't subdue,
Too true (paragorik too?)*

*Under the turf phare the daisies grue,
They planted Tom and 'is sister Sue,
And their little souls to the angels flue.
Boo-oo!*

*But as to the pear of emerald hue
Kissed bi the sun and bathed bi the due,
I'll add that its mission on earth is thro'.
Adieu.*

With a Greek alphabet handy the reader can realize the difficult stunt of transcription Field overcame in this version of "The Little Peach."

Before quitting Kansas City the development of this narrative of the graceless days of Eugene Field in his novitiate for fame permits the relation of one story which is a classic in that city. When Field was at the height of

KNOCKING AT THE GATE

his fame, the café and bar of George Gaston was the resort of its choice spirits, among whom Eugene was the bright particular luminary. It was a rule of the place that no customer's "checks" should exceed his week's salary—a rule never enforced against Field, who was the exception that proved every rule in George's rigid code of catering to Bohemian hunger and thirst. Only the length of the spindle measured Field's credit. Came Christmas time one year when that credit had mounted by slips of two bits (25 cents), four bits and a dollar or more to \$135.50. One day the *Times* printed a squib which Gaston considered fully the equivalent of the back score and he presented Field with a bill for the amount endorsed "paid in full." After eyeing the amazing document with suspicion for a moment, Field exclaimed:

"How's this, George?"

"Oh, that's all right," explained George shamefacedly.

"But this is receipted," ventured Field, still suspecting a backfire.

"Sure," returned the ingratiating creditor.

"Do I understand," said Field, sparring for an opening, with a gravity that should have warned the unsuspecting George, "that I have paid this bill?"

"That's what," was the laconic assurance.

"In full?"

"In full's what I said," repeated the smiling philanthropist, preening himself on his magnanimity.

"Well, sir," said Field, raising his voice without relaxing a muscle, "is it not the custom in Missouri when one gentleman pays another gentleman in full to set up the wine?"

For a moment Gaston could scarcely respire. But gradually shifting his feet uncomfortably, he recovered sufficiently to mumble, "Genus, this is one on yours truly."

And with one voice, Field's cronies lined up to the mahogany and ejaculated, "Make it a case, George!" George made it a case and they made a night of it such as would

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Dear Barton: I shall be in Kansas City next Sunday noon on the Santa Fe train en route to Los Angeles, whither I go to circumvent this pneumonia which has kept me sick for the last seven weeks. I send herewith a pen sketch of you on your way to the Kansas City station bearing two baskets of liquid refreshments wherewith to delight and solace your old and ever affectionate friend,

Eugene Field

Chicago, Dec 7th 1893.



A LETTER TO GEORGE GASTON

have rejoiced the hearts of Kit North, the Ettrick Shepherd and Timothy Tickler, in one of their jovial evenings at Ambrose's Hotel in those glorious "Noctes Ambrosianæ."

KNOCKING AT THE GATE

An echo of those unconventional days and proof of the enduring nature of the friendships then formed is preserved in the accompanying facsimile of a letter written by Field as late as 1893 to the victim of the foregoing episode.

In case the reader finds Field's penmanship too exquisitely fine for unassisted eyesight, it is worthy of Roman type:

DEAR GASTON:

I shall be in Kansas City next Tuesday noon on the Santa Fe train en route to Los Angeles, whither I go to circumvent this pneumonia which has kept me sick for the last seven weeks. I send herewith a pen sketch of you on your way to the Kansas City station bearing two baskets of liquid refreshments wherewith to delight and solace your old and ever affectionate friend,

EUGENE FIELD

CHICAGO, Dec. 7th, 1893.

George Gaston, by this time bearing proudly the title of "Colonel" bestowed by Field in those halcyon days of the early 80's, responded well laden with the required refreshments, reënforced with delicacies which he knew would appeal to the fastidious appetite of his sick friend. This letter was first published through the courtesy of Mrs. Gaston in 1924.

From such revels and such grotesque fooling Field often went to work next day without an hour's sleep, but through them all he was acquiring the knowledge of humanity and the command of English technique in prose and verse that led to fame and potential fortune.

CHAPTER VI

LIFE IN DENVER

IT was in Denver from 1881 to 1883 that Field was to round out the hobbledehoy period of his literary career. He was to continue an indefatigable merry-maker to the end of his altogether too short life. He was tempted to go to Denver from the congenial atmosphere of the *Kansas City Times* by the offer of the managing editorship of the *Tribune*, which was owned and exploited by the coalition of railroad and political interests then dominant in Colorado. Independent of the legitimate sources of newspaper revenue from circulation and advertisements, the *Tribune* was run on a scale of extravagance in the employment of a staff that won for it national recognition. At the head of this staff was O. H. Rothacker, one of the ablest and most versatile writers in the country, capable of breaking literary lances with the Danas, Raymonds and Marsa Henrys of the times. His series of sketches of the "Men of the Times" were models of biography in brief, written with a comprehensive vivacity of style that won quotation throughout the Union. In the management of the paper he was ably assisted and relieved of care by Fred J. V. Skiff, subsequently the first head of the Marshall Field Museum of Chicago, as its business manager. These two engaged Field as city editor and provided him with a staff and news-gathering establishment, with the simple instructions to "make the *Tribune* hum." And how they did make it hum! The humming thereof attracted so many libel suits that more waste baskets had to be provided to contain the daily grist of præcipes and

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bills—only a small per cent of which got much farther. As a rule, plaintiffs in libel suits get their first and last satisfaction out of the publicity given to the filing of the first papers. Searching for the reason for this phenomenon, the reader need not go beyond the fact of the general truthfulness and public justification of the publication complained of. No man who ever worked on a newspaper was more conscious of this fact than Eugene Field. The old English axiom, "The greater the truth the greater the libel," had no terrors for one who had learned in the newspaper schooling of St. Joseph, St. Louis and Kansas City before coming to Denver to put a sting of satire or ridicule in the tail of truth, that warned would-be libel suitors to beware.

Elsewhere in studying the character of Eugene Field's work in Denver I have endeavored to find, in the life and time of that city half a century ago, the true explanation of his violation of nearly all the conventions and canons of eastern society. He was a free lance in a community that knew few limitations on individual proprieties or improprieties. Denver in 1881 was very much what San Francisco was under the influence of the gold rush in the late forties and early fifties, only complicated with the rivalries of competing railways and an altitude 5,270 feet above sea level. All the politics, railway and mining interests of Colorado and other mining and cattle raising states, centered in Denver. The city throbbed with the energy of strife and speculation over mining claims, railway grants and political power. Life was rapid, "the goose hung high," and those who would knock down the persimmon of success had to use a long pole and wield it without mercy. The whole community was reckless in its gayety. It had not learned to affect the stupidity of the owl for fear of being bawled out as a jackdaw. To those who could stand the pace the very atmosphere of Denver was exhilarating and intoxicating.

Into the civilization just emerging from the mining camp

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and cradle into the political, financial and railway center of a vast and rich territory, came Eugene Field at the age of thirty-one as free from care, as warm-hearted and as open-handed as the veriest adventurer in Colorado. Although a devoted husband and the father of four children, domestic cares sat lightly on his stooping shoulders and he yielded his spare time to the intoxicating whirl of life about him. It is almost inconceivable where and how Field found time and strength for the dual life of work and play of his two years' stay in Denver. His duties on the city desk of the *Tribune* alone would have taxed the energies of the strongest man, and he was never robust. In his assignment to make the *Tribune* "hum," he mapped out and directed the work of his staff with a comprehensive shrewdness and appreciation of what his public wanted and would stand for that left no room for criticism or defied it. He knew and practiced successfully the gentle art of keeping your readers guessing what sensation you would spring next.

Besides, Field had no idea of letting his pen rust while directing the pencils of others. He started a column headed "Odds and Ends" to which he was the chief contributor. Under the title of "The Tribune Primer" he began the publication of those skits that subsequently were gathered into his first unpretentious book of forty-eight pages with that title which, in its original boards, has become one of the most sought for quarries of the American bibliomaniac. The first edition consisted of about fifty copies, of which probably less than ten copies are in existence, and a single copy has been sold for \$125.00. It has been reprinted in various forms and is rather a curiosity than a worthy specimen of Field's work at that time or any time. The paragraph printed in the preceding chapter in connection with "The Little Peach" is a fair sample of the style and matter of *The Tribune Primer*. Some of them are scarcely quotable and the spirit of mischievous deviltry runs through them all as in these instances:

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THE WASP

See the Wasp. He has pretty yellow Stripes around his Body, and a Darning Needle in his Tail. If you will Pat the Wasp upon the Tail, we will Give you a Nice Picture Book.

THE NASTY TOBACCO

What is that Nasty-looking object? It is a Chew of Tobacco. Oh, how naughty it is to use the Filthy weed. It makes the teeth black and spoils the Parlor Carpet. Go Quick and Throw the Horrid Stuff Away. Put it in the Ice Cream Freezer or in the Coffee Pot, where Nobody can see it. Little Girls, you should never chew Tobacco.

THE MUCILAGE

The Bottle is full of Mucilage. Take it and Pour some Mucilage into Papa's Slippers. Then when Papa comes Home it will be a Question whether there will be more Stick in the Slippers than on your Pants.

According to Mr. Cowen, who worked with Field on the *Denver Tribune* and later welcomed him to London and was one of his most intimate friends to the end, Field adopted this style of primer composition as a weapon of ridicule of Governor Evans, who had brought a libel suit against the *Tribune*, and a most effective weapon it proved to be with their little cuts after the fashion of John Phoenix.

In an introductory note to a few of the sketches omitted from the original *Tribune Primer*, printed in the *Cornhill Booklet* for January, 1901, Edward B. Morgan of Denver discredits Field's statement that the whole edition of the "Primer" did not exceed fifty, because of the unlikelihood of printing such a small edition of a book to be sold for twenty-five cents and advertising it daily a month in advance with a footnote, "Trade Supplied at Special Rates."

Mr. Morgan's reasons for discrediting the small edition of the *Primer* are the very reasons that would appeal to

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Field to do what he undoubtedly did. The fact that only seven or eight copies of the original "Primer" are known to book collectors bears out Field's statement, which finds further confirmation in the proposal he made to Francis Wilson as to the disposition to be made of the first edition of *Echoes from the Sabine Farm*.

"The *Echoes from the Sabine Farm*," says Mr. Wilson, "was privately printed. A hundred copies only were made, thirty on Japan, and seventy on Whatman paper. Field proposed that he should take one copy, and I a second, and that we should then destroy all the others. The idea was that we should be concerned in the issue of a de luxe edition so rare, so scarce, that succeeding generations of bibliomaniacs would weep and wail over their inability to secure a copy. That sort of thing delighted Field and was extremely interesting to me. Somehow he sensed that certain forms of what he wrote would ultimately be sought by bibliophiles."

They subsequently weakened on this conspiracy against their bibliophilic brethren, and issued the edition as first proposed; but I have a lurking suspicion that if Field had reversed the order of retaining the first two copies, my friend Wilson would have sacrificed the other ninety-eight copies to his deep-seated, ineradicable mania for "Number One" of so rare and beautiful a book. However, this echo from the Sabine Farm adds verisimilitude to the tale of the small edition of the *Tribune Primer*.

But Field's literary activities at this time were not confined to such banalities as the *Primer* paragraphs, with their freak capitalization and mock warnings to little boys and girls. He also ran and mostly wrote a column of unsigned verse and storiottes under the heading, "For the Little Folks." The only signed verses in this column were those he attributed to some of his friends or adversaries, as the spirit moved him, over their signatures. This, too, was a practice he delighted in to the last. The one most conspicu-

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ous and enduring example of this whimsical practice appeared at this time and eventually became one of his most deservedly popular poems. "The Wanderer," attributed

#

The Wanderer *

x

Upon a mountain height, far from the sea,
I found a shell,
And to my listening ear this lonely thing
Ever a song of ocean seem'd to sing -
Ever a tale of ocean seem'd to tell.

How came the shell upon the mountain height?
Ah, who can say
Whether there stopped by some too careless hand -
Whether there cast when oceans swept the land,
Ere the Eternal had ordained the day?

Strange, was it not? Far from its native deep,
One song it sang;
Song of the awful mysteries of the tide,
Song of the restless sea, far-fetched and wide -
Ever with echoes of the ocean song.

And as the shell upon the mountain height
Song of the sea,
So do I ever, leagues and leagues away -
So do I ever, wandering when I may,
Sing, O my home! sing, O my home! of thee!

*See Appendix, "A."

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to Madame Modjeska, contains one of the prettiest, tenderest and most poetic ideas that ever occurred to Eugene Field. From their first meeting there had sprung up a singularly warm and enduring friendship between Field and the great expatriated Polish actress, which formed the basis of the allegory of the shell far from its home on the old distant mountain height. So he wrote it in the first person, entitled it "The Wanderer" and sent it out over her name. The circumstances of its first publication justify its publication here, although undoubtedly it is one of Field's most familiar poems. I present his manuscript.

It has been stated that Madame Modjeska regarded the liberty taken with her name in this connection with displeasure, and Hamlin Garlin in a reported conversation with Field in 1893 credits him with saying that the most conspicuous work he did in Denver, next to *The Tribune Primer*, "was a bit of verse, 'The Wanderer,' which I attributed to Modjeska, and which has given her no little annoyance." If Field was reported right, it was merely another instance of his delight in misleading the apostle of realism. In a note to the manuscript from which the above version is copied, Field appended the following:

"These verses appeared in the *Denver Tribune* credited to Helena Modjeska. They were copied far and wide over Modjeska's name. Modjeska took the joke in pretty good part. The original publication was June, 1883."

Modjeska not only took the joke in "pretty good part," but she took the joker to her warm Slavic heart which, once captured, knew no limit in its affectionate regard, though Field on occasion tried it to the utmost.

In the column in which "The Wanderer" appeared, Field is credited with no less than 162 bits of verse—poems they are called—in *A Little Book of Tribune Verse* compiled and edited by Joseph G. Brown in 1901. With a few exceptions they add little to their author's reputation except in the matter of that amazing fecundity of composition that

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no other work could check. Among the exceptions Field's admirers will be surprised to find "Christmas Treasures," evidently reprinted from the *St. Louis Morning Journal* of Dec. 25, 1878. Here it bears the date Dec. 25, 1881, and also the distinction of the author's name, being the only verse of the 162 to be so honored.

There were, however, several others of the *Tribune* verses that contained the germs for future cultivation, notably "Jim's Kids," "The Jaffa and Jerusalem Railroad," and "The Awful Bugaboo." As this last, which first saw the light in the *Tribune* of Dec. 19, 1881, was developed into the "Seein' Things" of 1894, it gives a valuable line on the growth of the poet's skill:

THE AWFUL BUGABOO

*There was an awful Bugaboo,
Whose Eyes were Red and Hair was Blue.
His Teeth were Long and Sharp and White
And he went Prowling round at Night.*

*A little Girl was Tucked in Bed,
A pretty Nightcap on her head;
Her Mamma heard her Pleading say,
"Ah, do not take the Lamp away!"*

*But Mamma took the lamp
And oh, the Room was Dark and Damp.
The Little Girl was Scared to Death—
She did not Dare to Draw her Breath.*

*And all at once the Bugaboo
Came Rattling down the Chimney Flue;
He perched upon the little Bed
And scratched the Girl until she bled.*

*He drank the Blood and scratched again.
The Little Girl cried out in Vain,
He picked Her up and Off he Flew,
This Naughty, Naughty Bugaboo!*

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*So, children, when in Bed tonight,
Don't let them Take away the Light,
Or else the awful Bugaboo
May come and Fly away with you.*

It is a far cry in time and a farther one in literary value from "The Awful Bugaboo" to "Seein' Things," but despite the change in sex of the victims there can be no mistaking the persistence of the germ that loved to play upon the eternal objection of children to being left alone in the dark. As a doting parent, he loved to people the fearsome minds of little children with such fancies as

SEEIN' THINGS

*I ain't afeared uv snakes or toads, or worms or mice.
An' things 'at girls are skeered uv I think are awful nice!
I'm pretty brave, I guess; an' yet I hate to go to bed.
For, when I'm tucked up warm an' snug an' when my prayers are
said,*

*Mother tells me, "Happy dreams!" and takes away the light,
An' leaves me lyin' all alone an' seein' things at night.*

.

*Sometimes they are as black as ink, an' other times they're white.
But the color ain't no difference when you see things at night.*

.

*Lucky thing I ain't a girl, or I'd be skeered to death.
Bein' I'm a boy, I duck my head an' hold my breath.*

But enough of this demonstration of a fancy for the flub-dub, the flim-flam and the awful bugaboos which Field never failed to call to his aid when he wanted to give children that creepy feeling that makes them so fond of ghost stories.

To the ordinary mortal the duties and activities of Field on the *Denver Tribune*, merely suggested here, would seem sufficient to prepare him for bed and Nature's sweet restorer when the last form was locked up and the presses in the basement began to clank out their irrevocable summary of the day's doings. Not so with Field. Scarce waiting to

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wipe the grime of duty from his always pale face, he hastened to the chosen resort of his associates and abettors among the railway managers and agents, the politicians, mining speculators, lawyers and doctors of the town. Into this company every week would come a fresh troupe of the theatrical profession, breaking the long overland jump between San Francisco and New York for a one-week stand, going and coming. To the latter, Field's office by day was a Mecca sought for the write-up so dear to the Thesbian heart, and his company in the nightly revel was a reservoir for fresh anecdotes and witty stories to be carried to the West or East, as their flitting fared.

How they burned the candle at both ends in those Denver days may be illustrated by the story of the first meeting of Field and Edgar W., familiarly known to fame as "Bill" Nye. How Field discovered Nye is thus told. Nye was what old-time printers call "plugging along," without setting the prairie on fire, on the Laramie *Boomerang*. His peculiar vein of humor caught the journalistic eye of Field, who wrote to Nye and got him to contribute a weekly letter to the *Tribune* for the princely stipend of five dollars per letter. This was raised to ten dollars when the letters fitted in with Denver's sense of humor, and when Field informed Nye that he was to be paid fifteen dollars a letter, Nye promptly closed his *Boomerang* desk and posted off to Denver to see what sort of a Golconda was squandering its shekels on him. When he appeared in the *Tribune* office he looked more like a bewhiskered western farmer than the bald-headed, clean-shaven humorist with whose lean features the American public was to become so well acquainted. Entering Field's office and introducing himself, he was promptly welcomed and waved to a bottomless black walnut chair, purposely set with a few exchanges to break the ice with casual and unsuspecting callers. Through this chair "Bill" Nye dropped into a lifelong friendship and association with Eugene Field.

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After such an unceremonious introduction, nothing would confirm the *entente cordiale* between two such boon companions but a dinner given by Field at the St. James Hotel in honor of Bill Nye. The supper-dinner-breakfast started after the *Tribune* had gone to press and the boys went home with the larks in the morning. It is related that the company escorted their guest to his room at five o'clock and departed with effusive professions of good will. Waiting in the hotel office long enough for Nye to retire, they sent up cards requesting his presence downstairs on immediate business. Nye, however, was a match for his tormentors and the bell-boy returned, bearing a shotgun, with the message that it would speak for him.

When Nye first visited Field in Chicago his presence in town was heralded in the "Sharps and Flats" column with the following item:

The latest news from Bill Nye is to the effect that he has discovered a coal mine on his little farm near Hudson, Wis. Ten days ago he was spading over his garden—an exercise recommended by his physician—and he struck a very rich vein of what is called rock coal. Nye paid \$2,000 for his farm, and since the development of this coal deposit on the premises he has been offered \$10,000 for five acres. He believes that he has a great fortune within his grasp.

If Field's friends could have realized on the great fortunes with which his paragraphic fancy endowed them, they would have been rich beyond Johnson's dreams of avarice or "the wealth of Ormus and of Ind."

How impossible it was for Field himself, whether amid the golden opportunities of Denver or the hustling industries of Chicago, to lay up treasures on earth may be illustrated by the story related by Mr. Skiff, the business manager of the *Tribune*, whom he induced to advance "just another \$10" to meet some urgent domestic demands. Scarcely had Mr. Skiff had time to place the usual order in the cash drawer, ere Field stood before him once more pleading for "another X."

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"What has become of the other ten I just handed you?" he was asked.

"Just my luck, Fred," Field answered. "As I was leaving the office whom should I meet but one of my old printer boys, dead broke. The X was all I had, and he said he had to have it, and he had to."

Field got the second advance and succeeded in evading all impecunious "old boys" or "young bloods" on the way. But Mrs. Field's envelope was \$20 lighter that week. Evidently Eugene's hand was fashioned "to hold little water and less gold," as the reader will be convinced as he peruses these pages.

Among the many stories told of Field's rollicking life in Denver is one at the expense of Oscar Wilde, the original of Bunthorne when that apostle of sweetness and light first visited America. It occurred at the time when the æsthetic craze and the burlesques accompanying it were at their height. Anticipating Wilde's appearance in Denver by a day, and slipping in shrewdly worded advance announcements among local items in the *Tribune* to insure a curious crowd, Field hired the finest landau in town and was driven through the principal streets from the station to the hotel, made up in the living verisimilitude of the poet of the sunflower and the flowing flaxen wig.

His impersonation of Wilde à la Bunthorne in Gilbert and Sullivan's "Patience" was well calculated to deceive all not in the secret. Field's gift as a farceur and a mimic enabled him to carry off the expression of bored listlessness which was then the popular impression of the leader of the æsthetics, whom neither the pen of Whistler nor the broad satire of the cartoonists could faze. Except those in on the joke, no one in the curious, whooping, yelling crowd along the well-advertised route suspected the imposition and after a triumphant parade Field escaped from public gaze without betraying his identity.

If Field expected Wilde to show any emotion of resent-

LIFE OF EUGENE FIELD

ment or enjoyment over the hoax, he was doomed to disappointment. With a flip of his handkerchief, his only comment was, "What a splendid advertisement for my lecture!" And it was.

Out of a perfect storehouse of stories of Eugene Field's "mad wild ways" in Denver, one or two more must suffice to point a moral and adorn this tale. Here he widened the circle of his acquaintance with members of the theatrical profession, which he was tempted to enter and for which he was most richly endowed. As has been said, he had the adaptable face of a comedian, was a rare raconteur and a most engaging vocalist. As a parlor entertainer he was without an equal. Among his stage favorites was Mme. Sarah Bernhardt, then first touring America, and he celebrated her appearance in Chicago with a two-line item that went round the world:

"An empty cab drove up to the stage door of the Columbia Theatre last night, from which Madame Bernhardt alighted."

It delighted Field to claim Miss Kate Field as a cousin with whose name he could take more liberties than any bond of blood allowed, although there was no genealogical bond between them. He gleefully circulated the report that Miss Field was accompanied in her tour of the "woolly West" by an English sitz bath to alleviate the dust and hardships of travel in a land in which she "opined" stationary bathtubs were unknown. On Miss Field's return to New York she was repaid for all the skits she had suffered as marks of Eugene's affection on receiving a postal card bearing in his inimitable handwriting this by way of its sole address:

*A maiden fair of untold age
Seeks to adorn our Western stage;
How foolish of her, yet how nice,
To write me, asking my advice!*

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NEW YORK's the city where you'll find
This prodigy of female kind;
HOTEL VICTORIA's the place
Where you'll see her smiling face.
I pray thee, postman, bear away
This missive to her, sans delay.
These lines enclosed are writ by me—
A Field am I, a FIELD is she.
Two very fertile fields I ween,
In constant bloom, yet never green,
She is my cousin; happy fate
That gave me such a cousin KATE.

The only aids to the busy postman puzzling over this bit of microscopic manuscript were the words in different colored ink indicated by capitals in the above transcript. It got there just the same.

Mr. Wolfe Londoner, who was one of Field's intimates in Denver, in a short sketch of his friend speaks of him as "a bright ray of laughing sunshine across a shadowy valley, a mine of sentiment and charity, an avalanche of fun and happiness," but one who "never in all the run of his merry, joyous career was known to wake up with a cent. "There was no room," Londoner continues, "in his happy composition for aught of sorrow or sadness, and a quick and merry wit always extricated him from every embarrassing position or perplexing dilemma."

Of course, as a dear friend, Mr. Londoner had to be the occasional butt of Field's penchant for practical joking. During one campaign Mr. Londoner, as chairman of the Republican County Central Committee, was assigned the duty of working up enthusiasm among the colored voters of Denver. In an unguarded moment he boasted of his progress to Field. Imagine his feelings next morning when confronted by the following advertisement:

LIFE OF EUGENE FIELD

WANTED!!

Every Colored Man in the City
To call at Wolfe Londoner's
STORE.

A Car Load of Georgia
WATERMELONS

Just Received
For Special Distribution
Among His
Colored Friends

Call Early and Get your Melon!!

Was ever a more cruel hoax perpetrated on a confiding political leader and friend or on a watermelon-loving community? No explanation would or could allay the wrath or appease the whetted appetite of the dark multitude that with gleaming teeth and moistened lips hurried to Mr. Londoner's store. It was melons or a riot. Melons or a Democratic landslide, and the market was bare. Millions of broilers could not save the day.

Then the dear little angel that sits up aloft and takes care of such practical jokers as Eugene Field intervened. A carload of magnificent melons like manna from heaven dropped into one of the freight sidings. Whence it came, who ordered it, no one knew. It did not matter, nor did an exorbitant price which Mr. Londoner paid with the lordly air of a merchant who had expected that consignment, which he blustered should have been delivered the previous night. The Republican party was saved, the colored vote was solid, and Field outfaced Londoner with a calm, "I told you so!"

At the mass meeting hurriedly assembled to thank Mr. Londoner, Field prepared another surprise for his friend. He wrote the speech for the colored deacon of the church where it was held, in these words:

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"I now take pleasure in introducing to you our friend and brother, the Honorable Mistah Wolfe Londoner, who has always been our true friend and brother, who always advises us to do the right thing, and stands ready, at all times, to help us in the good fight. Although he has a white skin, his heart is as black as any of ours. Brothers, the Honorable Wolfe Londoner."

Field never wearied of telling another story at the expense of his friend Londoner, and as it concerned another of his stanchest friends in the years to come it is worth repeating here. According to Edward P. Mitchell, in his *Memoirs of an Editor*, a fascinating story of "Fifty Years of American Journalism" mostly with the *New York Sun*, the friendship between Field and Charles A. Dana dated from the latter's visit to Denver in 1882. This visit was made the occasion for one of the receptions for which the Press Club of that city was famous and in some conventional circles notorious. To Mr. Londoner, as president of the club, was assigned the rôle of delivering addresses of welcome to visiting guests and of looking after their comfort while in the city and of speeding them on their way when they came to depart and not infrequently furnishing funds to expedite their parting. When Mr. Dana was presented, he was naturally called on for a few fitting remarks, to which Londoner, designedly kept in ignorance of the guest's distinction, listened with the air of one who had heard that tale before. When Mr. Dana had finished, Mr. Londoner, according to Field's story, stepped up to Mr. Dana and extending his hand asked how much he wanted.

Mr. Dana eyed him through his large round glasses, with a puzzled air, and asked: "How much what? What do you mean?"

"Why, cash," Londoner is said to have replied. "Every newspaper man who ever came to this club, and was introduced as you were. and made a speech as you have, always

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came to me to borrow money to get out of town with. Now how much do you want?"

In telling the story Field said he never saw a man so greatly relieved as Mr. Londoner was when Mr. Dana assured him that his hotel bill was paid, his railway ticket bought, and he had enough money sewed into his waistcoat to carry him back to New York, where he had a good job waiting for him.

In justice to Field and the Press Club, another story with a different sequel should be put into the record of these romping days in Denver. Field accompanied the Club on an outing to Manitou, a summer resort that nestles in a cañon at the base of Mount Rosa, whence comes a now familiar mineral water. Before the party was fairly settled in the hotel, a poorly clad woman approached Field and poured into his ear a tale of indigence and bereavement. Field became interested, and without a moment's hesitation announced that a grand musical and dramatic entertainment would be given in the hotel parlor that evening "for the benefit of a deserving charity." Every guest in the hotel was invited, the Press Club members serving as "barkers" and ushers, but where the performers were to come from no one ventured a conjecture. Field's only answer to the curious was that "the Lord would provide the entertainment, if Manitou would furnish the audience." The evening came and Manitou had done its part with packed parlors; but no performers. As curiosity began to turn red with impatience, Field stepped to the piano with a solemn face and attacked it with all the grand airs of a foreign virtuoso. No one ever claimed that Eugene was a pianist, but his fingers could wander over the keys with a caressing touch that the greatest artists might envy, and that night he was inspired. He carried all the favorite airs of all the familiar operas in his fingers' ends. He knew the popular songs of the day by heart and where memory failed he improvised. He had a voice for the

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soft and deep chords of negro melodies redolent of Dixie and the plantation by moonlight, and that night in Manitou the Lord truly did provide him with everything needed to entrance that impromptu audience. By turns he sang, played, recited poetry, mimicked actors and well-known Colorado characters, told anecdotes grave and gay—and altogether gave such a single-handed entertainment that the spectators did not know whether to be more astonished at its infinite variety or delighted with its genius.

When Field took a sure-enough fancy to any one like that of Hamlet for Horatio—like his for Madame Modjeska, Charles A. Dana and Edward Cowen, his regard for them “knew no measure.” It cropped through the playful liberties he took with them in comic paragraphs or lilting verse. How it flamed up and persisted is well illustrated in his countless references to Miss Emma Abbott, a favorite light opera star, who held her place in Field’s affections and prose and verse from the Denver days while she lived. When she first came to Denver in September, 1881, he sang her praises with unbridled enthusiasm for several days in succession, beginning with:

TO EMMA ABBOTT

*Before thou camest, O creature fair,
The stars were diamonds in the sky,
Yet now, at night, oh, tell me why
I see no stellar diamonds there.*

*Before thou camest, the pretty trees
Coquetted with the gentle kiss
Of zephyrs; now they seem to miss
The dalliance of the amorous breeze.*

*Before thou camest, the western sky
Was all aflame with golden light,
And now, I wot, perpetual night
Hath mounted o’er the realm on high.*

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*Before thou camest, on yonder hill
The lark sang sweetly to his mate.
And now in vain we watch and wait
To see his flight and hear his trill.*

*The stars are jealous of thine eyes,
The lark is jealous of thy song,
Thy glorious hair, so fair and long,
Hath waked the envy of the skies.*

*The wanton zephyrs love to kiss
The rosy velvet of thy cheek,
And blushes play at hide and seek
With them. What ecstasy is this!*

*Ah, with the music of thy voice,
The wondrous beauty of thy grace,
Make this thy lasting living place,
Thy country's pride, our people's choice.*

Field always set great store by Miss Abbott's being American born and trained, and there was the genuine fervor of the affection of 1881 when he came to pay his last tribute to Emma Abbott in the lines concluding with:

*And, O white voiceless flower,
The dreams which thou shalt dream
Should be a glimpse of heavenly things,
For yonder like a seraph sings
The sweetness of a life
With faith always its theme;
While speedeth from those realms above
The messenger of that dear love
That healeth sorrow.
So sleep a little while,
For thou shalt wake and sing
Before thy King,
When cometh the morrow.*

Through all the years between the ecstasy of the young poet's verse and the tribute laid on the voiceless flower,

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there were to be numberless quips and gibes and mots, but never a note to cause a rift in the course of their friendship. They found it in Denver, and Field carried it with him to Chicago.

CHAPTER VII

FIELD MOVES TO CHICAGO

FOR what has been written so far of Eugene Field I have had to depend on hearsay or documentary evidence. Most of it has been heard or confirmed from his own lips. No one who was busily engaged in newspaper work, as I was during those years, could fail to make note of the tales of the pranks and pasquinades of Eugene Field of the *Denver Tribune*. The stories of what he did, however, had a wider vogue in green-rooms and newspaper offices than what he wrote—widely as his *Little Primer* skits were reprinted. Had his career ended ere he came to Chicago, little or nothing of literary value would have been left to keep his memory alive. True, before this he had written "Christmas Treasures," "The Little Peach" and "The Wanderer," that possessed the vital spark, the undefinable something that saves the written word from oblivion. And there was another poem that must be credited to this period, which contains the nearest approach to be found in Field's writing that he gave serious thought to the universal "Why" of human existence. Through nearly a score of years he sang and wrote of love, of motherhood, of childhood, of joy and grief and of all the fancies that man is heir to. But seemingly after coming up against the awful insoluble question in the last line of his "Song of the Brook," he drew back and never apparently approached that brink again. Although it carries the date of November, 1883, after Field came to Chicago, I have been unable to find trace of it in his column about that time. That is why this particular poem is singled out for the record here:

FIELD MOVES TO CHICAGO

A Song of the Brook.

I'm hastening from the distant hills
With swift and noisy flowing;
Nursed by a thousand tiny hills,
I'm ever onward going.
The willows cannot stay my course
With all their falset wailing -
I sing and sing till I am hoarse, -
My winding way pursuing;
I kiss the pebbles as I pass
And hear them say they love me -
I make obeisance to the grass
That kindly bends above me;
So, onward through the meads and dells
I hasten, never knowing
The secret motive that impels
Or whither I am going
A little child comes often here
To watch my quaint commotion
As I go tumbling, swift and clear,
Down to the distant ocean;
And, as he plays upon my brink,
So thoughtless like and merry,
And full of noisy song, I think
The child is like me, very.

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*Through all the years of youthful play
 With ne'er a thought of sorrow,
 We, prattling, speed upon our way,
 Unmindful of the morrow.
 Aye, through these sunny meads and dells
 We gambol, never trowing
 The solemn motive that impels
 Or whither we are going.*

*And men come here to say TO me (red to)
 "Like you, with WEIRD commotion, (red ird)
 O little singing brooklet, we
 Are HASTENING to the ocean; (red hastening)
 Down to a vast and misty DEEP (red deep)
 WITH FLEETING tears and laughter (red with fle)
 We go, nor rest until WE sleep (red we)
 In that proFOUND Hereafter. (red tail of f)
 What tides may bear our souls along
 What monsters rise appalling,
 What distant shores may hear our song (red s)
 And answer to our CALLING. (red calling)
 Ah, who can say! Through meads and dells
 We wander, never knowing
 The awful motive that impels
 Or whither we are going!"*

November, 1883.

In after years Field sang of the little brook and often of the little child, but child nor brook ever lifted for him or us the veil of the awful mysteries of the misty sea profound and wide of which the shell sang in "The Wanderer." The idea that the spiritual side of life never appealed to Eugene Field until he turned his back on Denver finds no support in such verses as these.

Eugene Field did not leave Denver on his own initiative but upon the opportune urging of Melville E. Stone of the *Chicago Daily News*, who, with his associate in that successful one-cent evening paper, some time in the spring of 1881 launched the *Chicago Morning News*, price two cents

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per copy. For this Mr. Stone gathered about him what he regarded as "the greatest newspaper staff in point of ability ever assembled in this country." Mr. Stone recalls that he first met Eugene Field in October, 1873, and had renewed the acquaintance at St. Joseph and Kansas City. How he came to invite Field to join the *Morning News* staff is thus told in Mr. Stone's racy reminiscences in his *Fifty Years a Journalist* (1921):

Early in 1883 William Elroy Curtis, the well known newspaper correspondent, and I took our wives for an outing in the West, having as our destination a visit to the wonderful Zuñi Indians in Arizona. On the way we stopped over at Denver, and one evening went to Taber's Opera House to hear Emma Abbott. I went out for a stroll between the acts. When I returned who should be sitting in the back row but my old-time friend Eugene Field. [After the first greeting Stone broached the question of Field's coming to Chicago and taking a place on the *Morning News*. They left the theatre and walked the streets for an hour discussing the pros and cons of the proposal, Field finally giving a tentative assent.] The engagement, [says Mr. Stone] was in itself characteristic. Field wanted to join me. He was tired of Denver and mistrustful of the limitations upon him there. But if he was to make a change, he must be assured that it was to be for his permanent good. He was a newspaper man not from choice, but because in that field he could earn his daily bread. Behind all he was conscious of great capacity—not vain nor by any means self-sufficient, but certain that by study and endeavor he could take high rank in the literary world and could win a place of lasting distinction. So he stipulated that he should be given a column of his own, that he might stand or fall by the excellence of his own work. Salary was less an object than opportunity.

Mr. Stone gave the necessary assurances—the opportunity being larger than the salary. And so they parted, Field reserving the right to change his mind if on reflection he concluded not to leave Denver just then. A few days later Mr. Stone received the following letter which concluded the bargain:

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DENVER, April 26, 1883

DEAR MR. STONE:

Had I supposed you were going to be in Denver a day longer I should have tried to have another talk with you and I believe we could have settled the question of my coming to Chicago. I repeat that I was much pleased by the way you talked relative to my casting my lot with the *News*, and I want to assure you once more that when I go to you it will be with the intention of staying. As I intimated to you while you were here, I cannot leave the *Tribune* people in the lurch. I have a contract with them till August 2, and, while I could get out of that contract, I would prefer abiding strictly by it. Would it suit you as well, providing we agree to other details, that I delay my coming to you till September 1? I will contract with you for two or three years, to do the work you specify, for \$50 per week the first year, \$50.50 per week the second year. If you choose to contract for three years, I shall want \$55 the third year. The reason I tack on the 50 cents for the second year is to gratify a desire I have to be able to say I am earning a little more money each year. This is a notion I have happily been able to gratify ever since I began reporting at \$10 a week.

Will you people allow me \$100 for the expense of breaking up housekeeping here and removing to Chicago? I am a deucedly poor man or I would not suggest such a thing. An attempt at honesty in the profession has kept me gloriously hard up, with a constantly increasing family. However, as you are not running a charity enterprise, I beg you will not consider this last suggestion if it seems an improper one. I trust to hear from you at your earliest convenience.

Yours very truly,
EUGENE FIELD

To Melville E. Stone

This letter is a very valuable contribution to our information regarding Field's move from Denver to Chicago. It explains the delay between his decision to go and his departure from Denver. It shows that the move was not accelerated by the lure of filthy lucre and it reveals the scale of newspaper pay in the early 80's. It also anticipates Field's adoption of the motto of "the good but im-

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pecunious knight sans peur et sans monnaie." In brief, Field's letter and Mr. Stone's memory of his engagement tallies with Mr. E. D. Cowen's summary of the situation. "Stricken by dyspepsia," wrote Mr. Cowen, the staunch friend he left behind, "so severely that he [Field] fell into a state of chronic depression and alarm, he eagerly accepted the timely offer of Melville E. Stone, then surrounding himself with the best talent he could procure in the West, of a virtually independent desk on the *Chicago Morning News*. There he quickly regained his health, although he never recovered from his ailment."

Here it is pertinent to this narrative to differentiate between the *Chicago Morning News*, to which Field henceforth was to be attached, and the *Chicago Daily Evening News*, its far less brilliant but financially successful parent, prop and unfailing exchequer with which Field was never directly connected. It was the transfer of the better part of the *Chicago Herald* staff across what was then Wells Street to the *Morning News* that was the making of the local force of the latter that was to be the apple of Mr. Stone's eye and that sat so heavy on Mr. Lawson's pay roll until he finally got rid of it a few years ago. It was no fault of Mr. Stone or Eugene Field or the able staff that for years made the *Morning News* the leading morning daily in Chicago, that it failed to duplicate the financial success of the *Evening News*. That was due to the conscientious scruples of Mr. Lawson, whose face was set like flint against publishing a Sunday newspaper. To those convictions he was true to the end. They did not interfere with the "ads" or "subs" for the six-day evening paper, but they were an insurmountable barrier in the way of the six-day morning paper—a majority of whose week-day readers had to depend on the *Sunday Tribune*, *Times-Inter-Ocean* or *Herald* for the accumulated news, reviews and gossip of the preceding week,—Saturday being in many respects the prize news quarry of the week. The handicap

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was too great to be overcome by the *Morning News*, or *Record*, as it was rechristened in 1890.

This was the newspaper situation to which Eugene Field came in August, 1883, when he moved with his family and all his personal effects, except his father's library, to Chicago. The library was left in St. Louis, safely stored against the time when he should feel financially able to give it quarters commensurate with its family associations and intrinsic value. Up to this time Field had little time and probably less inclination to learn from books. All stories of his being a close and omnivorous student before coming to Chicago are inconsistent with the observation of those familiar with how he occupied his time. He had that fifth sense of genius that takes in knowledge by some sort of cerebral assimilation not given to common mortals.

Field attained quite a reputation as a classical scholar without having acquired any mastery of or familiarity with the great Latin or Greek writers. He was not even familiar with the great masters of English literature, except as represented in the spoken drama and in the lilting verse of Burns and the love songs of the Elizabethan period. But language—all language—was easy to him. With the aid of a dictionary and a nimble wit he could make paraphrases of Sanskrit that would deceive and baffle its pundits. Student, in St. Louis, Kansas City or Denver, he was not, any more than at Williams, Galesburg or Columbia. And yet I doubt not that when Eugene Field came to Chicago he had a fixed intention, as suggested in the words of Mr. Stone, by study and endeavor to take high rank in the literary world and to "win a place of lasting distinction."

Coming to Chicago with a family consisting of Mrs. Field and their four children was a great adventure, for a man whose never too rugged health had been undermined by the fierce pace of Western journalism from 1873 to 1883. Happily for its sequel, Mrs. Field and the children enjoyed good health and the latter were endowed with appetites

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and digestions that were the envy of their father and the despair of their frugal mother. "Trotty" by this time was a girl of eight, Melvin a stout sober youth of six, "Pinny" a shrewd youngster of four, and Daisy (named Fred after Mr. Skiff) his mother's youngest pet, a sturdy boy of three summers.

The family took up its first abode in a small but convenient flat on Chicago Avenue, a few blocks from Lake Michigan and slightly more than a mile from the *Daily News* office. A short walk took Field to the Clark Street cars, which landed him within two blocks of the office. One bleak December day it occurred to Field that it was time the hoi polloi of Chicago was made aware that there was a stranger from Missouri in town. So he donned a long linen duster, buttoned up from knees to collar, over his warm clothing, put an old straw hat on his semibald head, with a shabby calf-bound volume under one arm and a large palm leaf fan in his hand and, thus equipped, he marched a mile down Clark Street, by the City Hall to the office. No sign or smile was permitted to flicker across his solemn face to betray his enjoyment of the commotion he created along the route. When he reached the entrance to the *Daily News* office, he dismissed the motley crowd that had gathered in his train with a grimace and a cabalistic gesture with his fingers and shut the door in their sheepish faces. Then he toiled up two pairs of stairs to the editorial rooms, where he retailed the incidents of his joke with all the glee of a boy in his teens.

Field had not been in Chicago two months before he realized his error in impressing Mr. Stone with his thought that opportunity was more an object to him than salary. Opportunity buttered no parsnips for a family of six, albeit one of their number was on a strict diet. Moreover, a diet for a sensitive stomach is often more expensive than corned beef and cabbage. The salary that seemed sufficient in the rarefied air of Denver scarcely sufficed to provide Tom

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Hood's "three grains of corn" to keep the wolf from the door of Eugene Field's flat in Chicago. This situation gave point to the incident, when Trotty asked her father to give her an appropriate text to recite to her Sunday school teacher; he schooled her to rise and declaim with dramatic conviction:

"The Lord will provide; my father can't."

There was no mistrust in little Miss Trotty's eyes or voice as she delivered this trusting message with its truthful impeachment to her amused teacher. Trotty was Field's favorite child, possibly because she was the only girl and he was very fond of little girls, but also because in physical and mental characteristics she favored the Field side of the family. She had the same large innocent-looking blue eyes, in which lurked the spirit of mischief.

The reason for Eugene Field's selection of Chicago as the last stand in his campaign for literary recognition and distinction lies on the surface. By that intuition which is the guide of such natures as his he felt that Chicago was as far east as he could go without sacrificing that freedom from the conventions that he believed benumbed native American literature. He had rejected several tempting offers from New York newspapers before coming to Chicago, and of my own knowledge scarcely a year went by that Field did not decline an engagement, personally urged by Mr. Dana, to go to the *New York Sun* at double the remuneration he was receiving from the *News*. But, as he told Julian Ralph on one occasion, he would not live in or write for the East. For, as he phrased it, there was more liberty and fewer literary "fellers" out West, and a man had more chance to be judged on his merits and "grow up with the country." And so he came to Chicago and for twelve years as Chicago grew, Field grew.

Now the Chicago to which Eugene Field came in 1883 was a very different city from what it is now as the fourth

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largest city in the world and still growing. Although it had then a population of over 600,000, it was still in the swaddling clothes of civic development. It had been rebuilt hurriedly after the fire, without having time to incorporate any of the more modern ideas of architecture or municipal progress. It was being permitted to grow up like Topsy. Lake Michigan had not yet asserted its spell of beauty as well as fresh air over the people, and population was moving across to the west side of the North and South branches of the Chicago River. That river was still spanned by swing bridges turned by hand, the signal for turning being a bell, which gave birth to the story that you could always tell a Chicagoan in New York by the way he started to run at the first clang of a bell. Horse cars still monopolized the streets; and six miles an hour on them was rapid transit, and straw served for matting in zero weather. The polluted water of the river ran sluggishly into the Lake and the waterworks crib, though two miles from shore, was not always beyond its contaminating flow.

But the inhabitants of Chicago had faith in their city and were already bending their backs to the task of its advancement. They were so engrossed in business that they took little time off for recreation. At night, however, they were the greatest theatergoers on the continent. The losses which the best artists and plays made in New York and other cities of the East were frequently recouped in Chicago. The same feverish devotion to business that drove citizens to the theaters for relaxation sent them to their beds immediately after the last curtain fell. The result was that in the early 80's there was not a single fashionable restaurant in the city catering to supper parties after the play, as were to be found in New York or London by the score.

Chicago's love for the drama did not extend to its half sister, grand opera. It sought recreation and amusement, and regarded grand opera as serious as well as expensive

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business. As Eugene Field put it, Chicago liked music "limited"; and its liking was accordingly limited to light or comic opera and the annual entertainments of the Apollo Club, until Theodore Thomas, with unconquerable perseverance, aided and abetted by the pocketbooks of public-spirited citizens, rather than music lovers, succeeded in cultivating the love and study of music up to a standard above that of any other American city, with the possible exception of Boston. Since Mr. Thomas's death, the work has been crystallized and carried forward by his successor, the Chicago Symphony Association, to a height where that exception is obsolete.

I have noted the theatrical and musical conditions in Chicago in 1883, because it was in them Eugene Field found his most congenial atmosphere and pleasure on his arrival in that year. In them he found his most enduring compensation for the freedom and friendships he had left along the way hither. In those days the Thomas orchestral concerts were given in the old Exposition Building, long since torn down to make way for the Art Institute building, which, with its annexes sprawls out over several acres, including the Illinois Central's railway tracks. At these concerts Field was a regular attendant and he almost every week sent in one of the choices for the request programs which Mr. Thomas delighted to give and his audiences received with warmer marks of approval than were accorded to his more classical selections, which for years were above their attentive but unschooled ears.

Coming from the higher altitude of the foothills of the Rockies to the level of Lake Michigan, with its shifting winds, nothing about Chicago impressed Field more unpleasantly than the harshness of its variable summer climate. His blood was thin and a drop of the mercury from the neighborhood of 90 degrees to 60 degrees or lower in a few minutes froze the marrow in his bones and he

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took it out the next morning in diatribes on the weather—in verse or prose, after this fashion:

CHICAGO IN AUGUST

*When Cynthia's father homeward brought
An India mull for her to wear,
How were her handsome features fraught
With radiant smiles beyond compare!
And to her bosom Cynthia strained
Her pa with many a fond caress—
And ere another week had waned
That mull was made into a dress.*

*And Cynthia, blooming like a rose,
Which any swain might joy to cull,
Cried, "How I'll paralyze the beaux
When I put on my India mull!"
Now let the heat of August day
Be what it will—I'll not complain—
I'll wear the mull, and put away
This old and faded-out delaine!*

*Despite her prayers, the heated spell
Descended not on mead and wold—
Instead of turning hot as—well
The weather turned severely cold.
The lake dashed up its icy spray
And breathed its chill o'er all the plain—
So Cynthia stays at home all day
And wears the faded-out delaine!*

*So is Chicago at this time—
She stands where icy billows roll—
She wears her beauteous head sublime
While cooling zephyrs thrill her soul.
But were she tempted to complain,
Methinks she'd bid the zephyrs lull,
That she might doff her old delaine
And don her charming India mull.*

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Eugene Field made his bow to the readers of the *Chicago Morning News* on August 15th, 1883, with a scant column of paragraphs such as he had contributed to the *Denver Tribune*. On the following day his column bore the title and Field was really off, as they say on the race-course, on his long round of daily columns of nonpareil type first line brevier that he was to make famous for the next twelve years, with all too few breathing spells. At first it bore the makeshift title of "Current Gossip," instead of the "Odds and Ends" of his Denver days. That there was no immediate change in Field's methods or subjects may be judged from these specimens following the printer's style and measure of their presentation:

It is said, though not authoritatively, that purely upon grounds of protection the buffaloes are fleeing to the Yellowstone Park in great numbers.

Minnie Palmer's dramatic success in Great Britain is said to be largely due to the enterprise of her husband who has made the press and public believe that he is the original John Rogers who was burned at the stake, "followed thither by his wife and nine small children."

The dark waltz squeeze is a saltatory divertisement which appears to be achieving lamentable popularity among social circles of the giddier class. It is supposed to be a cross between the Alhambra mazurka and Castilian fandango—two foreign varieties which Hannibal Hamlin is said to have brought back with him from the effete court of Spain.

After a lapse of more than two score years it is proper perhaps to explain that the point of the first of these items related to the presence of President Arthur with a hunting party of distinguished friends in the Yellowstone Park at that time. The point of the second will be apparent to all familiar with the New England Primer story of John Rogers, while the third item illustrates the liberty Field then and always took with the names, not to say reputations, of public men Americans delighted to honor—in this instance the venerable vice-president of Lincoln's first term.

Eugene Field was destined to climb far up the literary ladder from the day he penned these trifles to composing *The Love Affairs of a Bibliomaniac*, but as late as April

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4, 1895, he paused long enough to drop into such a little poetic *feu de joie* as this to an aldermanic celebrity of the time:

*Things are looking mighty blue,
Hinky Dink!
Since the skates lambasted you,
Hinky Dink!
'Twas an evil deed they done
When the rats and terriers trun
Hinky Dink!*

On August 31, 1883, the makeshift title "Current Events" gave place to that of "Sharps and Flats," under which sign he was to shoot folly as it flew for the remainder of his life. There has been much gossip as to how Field came to hit upon this title, but there has been no doubt among those who were present at the christening and knew. Among these was Melville E. Stone, who in his *Fifty Years a Journalist*, already mentioned, records that "The title was borrowed from the name of a play—'Sharps and Flats'—written by Slason Thompson of the Chicago *News* staff and played with notable success by Robson and Crane," the only error in this statement being the omission of the name of the joint author of the play, Clay M. Greene.

A most ingenious derivation of the title was evolved by John B. Livingstone in "An Appreciation" of Eugene Field, published in the *Interior* shortly after his death. "What Virgil was to Tennyson," wrote Mr. Livingstone, "Horace was to Field in one aspect at least of the Venusian's character. . . . It has been suggested that he owed to a clever farce comedy of the early 80's the caption of the widely read column of journalistic epigrams and persiflage, which he filled with machine-like regularity and the versatility of the brightest French journalism for ten years. I prefer to think that he took it, or his cue for it, from a line of Dr. Phillips Francis' translation of the eighth of the first book of Horatian Satires:

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*Not to be tedious or repeat
How Flats and Sharps in concert meet*

"Field's knowledge of Horace and of his translations was complete, probably not equalled by that of any other member of his craft. He made a specialty of the study, a hobby of it. And it is more likely, as it is more gratifying, to believe that he caught his famous caption (Sharps and Flats) from a paraphrase of his famous classic poet than from the play bill of a modern and ephemeral farce."

This is a very pretty conceit of a clever writer seeking for some far-fetched classic derivation of a perfectly obvious caption. It has the defects of all such attempts to misinterpret the springs of Eugene Field's ways and methods. For its purpose it anticipates Field's familiarity with Horace's odes and satires by about five years. It was not until Field had been introduced to the society and learning of Father Prout by Dr. Frank W. Reilly that he developed his love for Horace and became thoroughly saturated with his spirit. It was to that same Father Prout that he was indebted for his familiarity with the songs of France, as evidenced in his many paraphrases of Béranger and Hugo. From Father Prout Field assimilated more true scholarship, more knowledge of the classics, than from all the midnight oil he did not burn poring over books from Amherst to Denver. If he did not borrow the title of "Sharps and Flats" from the light comedy of that name he was perfectly capable of evolving it from his inner fancy as a variant for Puck's "What fools these mortals be," upon whom throughout his life he practiced the gentle art of fooling to the top of his bent. When he was fooling, the *Flats* thought he was serious; and when he was serious, the *Sharps* knew he was fooling. In his early years his tongue was in his cheek in most of what he wrote, and delighted to put over as truth or fiction.

The room in which Eugene Field was installed in Chi-

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cago would have made the box stall of a turf favorite sumptuous by comparison. Its library consisted of a dilapidated edition of Bartlett's *Familiar Quotations*, Cruden's *Concordance of the Bible* and a well-thumbed copy of the King James version of the Bible—revised versions were anathema to him. Father Prout's *Reliques* had not then been added to that triumvirate of first aids to English composition. The *Daily News* library was down a flight of stairs and no one ever consulted it with clean hands—which was not the reason Field seldom disturbed the somnolent calm of the librarian's duties. There was a Webster's dictionary in the local room, to which Field shambled when in search of the Latin or Greek root of some unfamiliar word he wished to exploit. Amid such surroundings Eugene produced his best work previous to 1890—and that includes the best he ever wrote except *The Love Affairs of a Bibliomaniac* and the few intimations of genius in the years before coming to Chicago. At no time in his career did Field depend on his surroundings or on scholarship for inspiration. His chief reliance was on the association with mankind and womankind, too, and the unconventionality of his home life.

It is difficult to weigh the part "circumstance which fashioneth us all" played in the development of Eugene Field's career on the *Morning News*. For two years that newspaper made small progress toward the ambitious goal Mr. Stone had set for it. It was treading the water, so to speak, that the *Daily News* was pouring into it, when Mr. Stone bethought himself of reënforcing this staff with the paragraphic star that had risen in the West. The experiment of hitching a newspaper wagon to a single star was in process of its usual sequel when a convulsion in the ownership and editorial force of the *Chicago Herald*, a two-cent rival of the *Morning News*, came to Mr. Stone's rescue. Within a week of Field's coming to the *News*, nine-tenths of the editorial staff of the *Herald* moved across

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Wells Street into the editorial and local rooms of the *News*. In that hegira was included John F. Ballantyne, who became managing editor, David Henderson, who, after a brief stay as managing editor of the *Evening News*, resigned to become manager of the Chicago Opera House, Robert B. and Mrs. (Elia) Peattie, Harry B. Smith, subsequently of musical comedy fame, W. S. B. Matthews, admittedly the most competent musical critic in the West, Dr. Frank W. Reilly, who had been the *Herald's* Springfield correspondent, and a half dozen of the best young reporters in Chicago, headed by William Knox. I brought up the rear, and was first assigned as editorial paragrapher for the *Evening News*, then the only editorial comment indulged in by it, only to be immediately promoted to an adjoining box stall to Eugene Field's as the leader writer for the *Morning News*. So we became first acquainted, and through this editorial convulsion Mr. Stone secured his heart's desire—a really efficient newspaper staff.

What effect this invasion had on Field, susceptible as he was to associations and surroundings, can best be told in the words of Mr. Cowen, whose own intimate relations with Field antedated ours and continued to the close:

"Coming immediately under the influence of John Ballantyne and Slason Thompson," writes Mr. Cowen, "respectively managing editor and chief editorial writer of the *News*—the one possessed of Scotch gravity and the other of fine literary taste and discrimination—the character of Field's work quickly modified, and his free and easy, irregular habits succumbed to studious application and methodical labor. Ballantyne used the blue pencil tenderly, first attacking Field's trick fabrications and suppressing the levity which found vent in preceding years in such pictures of domestic felicity as this:

*Baby and I the weary night
Are taking a walk for his delight,*

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*I drowsily stumble o'er stool and chair
And clasp the babe with grim despair,
For he's got the colic
And paregoric
Don't seem to ease my squalling heir.*

*Baby and I in the morning gray
Are griping and squalling and walking away—
The fire's gone out and I nearly freeze—
There's a smell of peppermint on the breeze;
Then Mamma wakes
And the baby takes
And says, "Now cook the breakfast, please."*

"The everyday practical joker and entertaining mimic of Denver recoiled in Chicago from the reputation of a Merry Andrew, the prospect of gaining which he disrelished and feared. He preferred to invent paragraphic pleasantries for the world at large and indulge his personal humor in the office, at home or with personal friends. Gayety was his element. He lived, loved, inspired and translated it, in doing which latter he wrote without strain or embarrassment, reams of prose satire, *contes risqués*, and Hudibrastic verse."

A brutal assault on Cowen by a notorious ruffian of Leadville, at first thought to be fatal, inspired the following paragraph in the "Sharps and Flats" column on September 12th, 1883, shortly after its institution:

Edward D. Cowen, the city editor of the *Leadville Herald*, who was murderously assaulted night before last by a desperado named Joy, was one of the brightest newspaper men in the West. He came originally from Massachusetts, and has relatives living in the southern part of Illinois. He was about thirty years of age. He went to Leadville about three months ago to work on ex-Senator Tabor's paper, the *Herald*, and was doing excellently well. He was a protégé, to a certain extent, of Mrs. Tabor No. 2. She admired his brilliancy, and volunteered to help him in any possible way. It was speaking of him that she said: "My life will henceforth be devoted to assisting worthy young men. In life we must prepare for death, and how can we better prepare for death than by helping our fellow-

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creatures? Alas!" she added with a sad, sad sigh, "alas! death is, after all, what we live for." Young Cowen had all the social graces men and women admire; he was bright in intellect, great in heart, and hearty of manner. The loss of no young man we know would be more deplored than his demise.

This paragraph is one of those puzzling mixtures of the genuine with the fantastic, so characteristic of much of Field's work. The passage telling of Mrs. Tabor's interest in Cowen is wholly apocryphal; attributing to Cowen special social graces was a humor Field thought plagued his associate, whose manly and constant qualities of loyal friendship never faltered.

Cowen never wholly recovered from the effects of this assault, bearing the marks to this day. He often rallied Field over the past tense of this paragraph, but I have always suspected that Field was assured of his friend's convalescence and it was his humor to fashion his item in the obituary tense.

Reference has been made to the "box stall" quarters in which Field was destined to do his daily dose of sharps and flats for more than a decade. As the days which we are recalling are receding into ancient history, it may not be amiss to give the reader a brief description of the *Morning News* editorial rooms in 1883. When the *Daily News* was started by Melville E. Stone on the first of January, 1876, he thus describes its establishment: "As workshop we secured accommodations in the building occupied by a daily Norwegian paper, the Skandinaven. The composing room was on the fourth floor and one corner was partitioned off roughly to serve as an editorial department. The writing was done on inverted packing cases. As a number of other papers were published in the building, we were able to rent press facilities. Our business office was a space about ten feet square railed off in a corner of the counting-room of the Skandinaven."

Such were the *Daily News* offices in 1876 and so they re-

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remained until 1880, when as the agent of the New York Associated Press I first visited them daily in pursuit of live Western news for the effete East. There at that time I met Mr. Stone and his assistant editors, Collins Shackelford and John J. Flinn, a truly remarkable journalist, who after a brief term as American consul at Chemnitz, Saxony, became the leading editorial writer on the *Christian Science Monitor*, from its founding for eleven years.

Such were the *Daily News* quarters until Mr. Stone in 1881 knocked out the north partition on the third floor to make room in the adjoining building for the editorial rooms of the *Morning News*. This building was 25 feet wide, outside measurement. The front was partitioned off half-way up to the ceiling into three "box stalls," 7 x 10 feet each. Field monopolized one, the dramatic critic and our solitary artist one, and Morgan Bates, the exchange editor, and I the third. The floors of no two of these buildings were on the same level. They had served their time as lodging houses. By 1883 the presses and storerooms for the rolls of paper filled the cellar. The business office occupied the central store, being flanked on either side by stores that would have been more respectable had they been rented for saloons, which the conscientious scruples of Messrs. Lawson and Stone forbade. Intermediate floors were rented as lodgings. Mr. Stone had his office up one flight of the center building in the front, approached through what had been a hall bedroom, where his secretary scrutinized callers' cards and played the rôle of buffer to the chief. Mr. Stone's sanctum—every editor's room was a sanctum—only some were sanctum sanctorum in those days—was finished and furnished with black walnut, which added an air of dark mystery to the gloomy interior. Mr. Stone had the natural or cultivated air of a chief inquisitor. He missed becoming the world's greatest detective when he diverted his talents to founding a daring, alert and truly independent newspaper.

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In the rear of Mr. Stone's room was the library, consisting chiefly of a complete file of the *Congregational Record* and more or less inches of Chicago's blackest dust, through which I waded to exhume "Sharps and Flats" in 1900. George E. Plumbe, editorial writer on the *Daily News* and for many years compiler of the *Daily News Almanac and Political Register*, presided over this scene, amid which our daily conferences, "Senibodi," we called them, were held. One of the conferences of the Senibodi as pictured by Field appears elsewhere. None of us ever came out of that library as clean handed as we entered—the one clean towel a day forbade it. Nothing but the journalistic desire to lend an air or similitude to an otherwise unconvincing story by citing a few facts ever induced Field or any of the staff to borrow the spring latchkey from Ballantyne to disturb the soporific labors of Mr. Plumbe.

Something of the spirit that prevailed around the *News* office may be gathered from the following verses written by Field in pencil on three sheets of common copy paper without a caption and attributed to Mr. Stone:

*I wish my men were more like Plumbe
And not so much like me -
I hate to see the paper hum
When it should stupid be;
For when a lot of wit and rhyme
Appears upon our pages
I know too well my men in time
Will ask a raise in wages,*

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*I love to sit around and chin
With folk of doubtful fame,
But oh, it seems a dreadful sin
When others do the same;
For others gad to get the news
To use in their profession,
But everything I get I use
For purpose of suppression.*

*When I am on the ticket lay
I'm just as smooth as 'lasses,
But angrily I send away
The man who asks for passes.
No man of mine shall get a "percq"—
No, not if Melville knows—
But, God a' mighty; how I work
The railroads and the shows.*

For the benefit of juvenile readers of these lines perhaps it should be explained that before the passage of the Interstate Commerce Act the issue of railroad passes to newspapers had assumed such proportions as to be a national scandal. Such transportation as the *Daily News* received, however, was in exchange for advertising and was in no sense free. Field's poetic license in the above verses does injustice to Mr. Stone if it conveys the impression that he gathered news or suppressed it from any ulterior motive aside from the legitimate offices of journalism. The public good was the only rudder we steered by in those days, but we had drawers full of facts held in reserve against libel suits and slippery witnesses.

To resume the description of the *Morning News* editorial quarters: Mr. Ballantyne, our managing editor, occupied what had been a rear hall bedroom at the head of another long, narrow, dark flight of stairs. It was possibly 7 x 10 feet and he was six feet two tall, but happily slender and of an orderly nature, or that stall could not have accommodated him, his file rack, a flat-topped desk, his feet

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and the retriever, Snip—the only dog Field ever thoroughly detested.

Ballantyne's room boasted a second chair, which precluded the closing of the door by any visitor desiring to "see the editor privately." The remainder of this floor and that of the next building to the south were taken up by the composing room. To the north, between the head of the stairs and Mr. Ballantyne's room, was the entrance down three steps to the editorial room of the *Morning News*, at the front of which was partitioned off the three rooms already mentioned.

Field's room, in which while his health lasted he did ninety-nine hundredths of his work, deserves more than passing attention. The journeymen carpenters who planned and executed the job despised anything in the way of decorations beyond a few convenient nails driven in the wall to hang coats on. Field attended to the decoration himself. In one corner he had nailed up a second-hand cupboard pigeon file for clippings, alphabetically arranged, which he never touched. Scattered about the floor were dumb-bells, Indian clubs and other gymnastic apparatus for which he had no use, and a cuspidor which he used voluminously. The janitor had orders not to touch anything, and he obeyed his orders. Above Field's desk hung a sheet of tin, which he used as a call bell or in winter to drown the noise of the printer's devil shaking down the big globe stove which constituted our sole heating plant. To those unfamiliar with the newspaper offices of the 80's it will be news to learn that the death of the entire editorial staff by freezing was of small concern compared with a temperature in the basement that chilled the ink to the consistency of molasses frappé.

Originally Field's room did not boast a writing desk. It was furnished with a substantial pine table with two drawers. Field had no use for a desk with pigeonholes, for he carried his library in his domeshaped head and wrote with



FIELD AT WORK

The caricature is from a drawing by Sclanders.

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his pad of yellow paper in his lap, as shown in the accompanying illustrations. These are two of the most important pictures ever made of Eugene Field. No. 1 is from a blue print taken without his consent and, in my opinion, is the most speaking likeness of Field extant. Its very unconsciousness gives it a charm and the exaggerated feet in the foreground justify his comment written on the back, "And they call this art." No. 2 is from a cartoon pencil drawing by our friend J. C. Sclanders, the *Daily News* artist, who was constantly amusing himself and us by making grotesque portraits of Field. If I had only thought to preserve them, they would make a portrait gallery worthy of Mr. Bixby's pocketbook. In further explanation of these pictures, it should be said that except in the coldest weather Field invariably wrote in his shirt sleeves, generally with his waistcoat unbuttoned and his collar off, and always with his feet crossed on a level with his chin across the corner of the table aforesaid. The first thing he did on coming into the office after removing his outer coat was to take off his shoes and don a pair of slippers with no counters, so that they dangled from his toes when he wrote, as seen in the Sclanders cartoon, and slapped along the floor as he walked. Why Field invariably rolled up his trousers on entering the office and turned them down when going out, no one ever knew. Possibly he would have answered as Shylock to why he'd rather choose

*A weight of carrion flesh than to receive
Three thousand ducats?
It is my humor.*

It was Field's humor to do many of the unconventional things he did. But there may have been a more cogent reason that the unbuttoning of his "vest" to give him more comfort sitting on the curve of his spine to write, permitted his trousers to drag. But Field would never have admitted any such economical reason for an eccentric act.

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The two illustrations are particularly valuable in that they set at rest any and all the silly claims that Field never smoked or used tobacco. The idea was caught up by the uncautious from the "I do not smoke tobacco" of his ever-misleading *Auto-Analysis*. Field was an inveterate smoker, as the pictures prove, and as for twelve years I had occasion to know. I did not smoke, and it was my practice to pass the ingratiating stream of "Henry Clays" *et hoc genus omne*, on to the grateful Eugene. The cuspidor in Sclanders' cartoon speaks for itself. Other biographers of Field have tried to distort the "I drink no wine or spirits of any kind" into an assertion that he never drank wine or spiritous liquors, when the fact is notorious that previous to coming to Chicago he was addicted to the flowing bowl to the point of exhilaration but never intoxication. He drank freely and kept sober because he was so constituted that spirits had no other effect on his behavior mentally or physically than to make him more vivacious, if that were possible.

Here let it be put on record that after coming to Chicago Field banished all intoxicants from his regular menu. Treating him for a rebellious stomach trouble, the doctors had written an emphatic "must" opposite the edict to give up the use of intoxicants, and he obeyed to the letter, but this did not deter him from sniffing or even tasting some choice vintage to pass upon its merits. But the rarest vintage never tempted him farther. And so he became known to his intimates as a connoisseur of liquors with the best and a teetotaler with an insatiable taste for coffee.

And now having given a fairly exhaustive picture of the surroundings amid which Field was to produce the most variegated column of satire, wit and gossip ever laid on the breakfast table of the readers of a daily newspaper, let us picture forth the strange being capable of such control over the tastes and emotions of such a mixed multitude as followed his vagaries in the "Sharps and Flats" column for

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so many years. And here, with the gracious permission of Messrs. Charles Scribners' Sons, I will quote bodily the description of the man as it appeared in the *Study of Eugene Field* which was written when the subject was fresh in my memory twenty-five years ago.

Now of the man as I first saw him. He was at that time in his thirty-third year. If Eugene Field had ever stood up to his full height he would have measured slightly over six feet. But he never did and was content to shamble through life, appearing two inches shorter than he really was. Shamble is perhaps hardly the word to use. But neither glide nor shuffle fits his gait any more accurately. It was simply a walk with the least possible waste of energy. It fitted Dr. Holmes' definition of walking as forward motion to prevent falling. And yet Field never gave you the impression that he was about to topple over. His legs always acted as if they were weary and would like to lean their master up against something. As to what that something might be, he would probably have answered "Pie."

Field's arms were long, ending in well-shaped hands, which were remarkably deft and would have been attractive had he not at some time spoiled his fingers by the nail biting habit. His shoulders were broad and square, and not nearly as much rounded as might have been expected from his position while writing. It was not the stoop of his shoulders that detracted from his height, but a certain settling together, if I may so say, of the couplings of his backbone. He was large boned throughout, but without the muscles that should have gone with such a frame. He would probably have described himself as tall, big, gangling. He had no personal taste or pride in clothing, and never to my knowledge came across a tailor who took enough interest in his clothes to give him the benefit of a good fit or to persuade him to choose a becoming color. For this reason he looked best dressed in a dress suit, which he never wore when there was any possibility of avoiding it. His favorite coat was a sack, cut straight, and made from some cloth in which the various shades of yellow, green and brown struggled for mastery.

But it was of little consequence how Field's body was clothed. He wore a $7\frac{3}{8}$ hat and there was a head and face under it that compelled a second glance and repaid scrutiny in any company. The photographs of Field are numerous and preserve a fair impression of his remarkable physiognomy. None of the paintings of him that I have seen do him justice, and the etchings are not much of

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an improvement on the paintings. The best photographs only fail because they cannot retain the peculiar death-like pallor of the skin and the clear, innocent china-blue of the large eyes. These eyes were deep set under two arching brows, and yet were so large that their deep setting was not at first apparent. Field's nose was a good size and well shaped, with an unusual curve of the nostrils strangely complementary to the curve of the arch above the eyes. There was a mole on one cheek, which Field always insisted on turning to the camera and which the photographer very generally insisted on retouching out in the finishing. Field was wont to say that no photograph of him was genuine unless that mole "was blown in on the negative." The photographs all give him a good chin, in which there was merely the suggestion of that cleft which he held marred the strength of George William Curtis's lower jaw.

The feature of his face, if such it can be called, where all portraits failed, was the hair. It was so fine that there would not have been much of it if it had been thick, and as it was quite thin there was only a shadow between it and baldness. Even its color was illusive—a cross between brown and dove color. Only those who knew Field before he came to Chicago have any impression as to the color of the thatch upon that head which never during our acquaintance stooped to a slouch hat. The formal black or brown derby for winter and the seasonable straw hat for summer seemed necessary to tone down the frivolity of his neckties, which were chosen with a cowboy's gaudy taste. To the day of his death Field delighted to present neckties, generally of the made-up variety, to his friends, which, it is needless to say, they never failed to accept and seldom wore. Often in the afternoon as it neared two o'clock he would stick his head above the partition between our rooms and say:

"Come along, Nompv"—his familiar address for the writer—"come along and I'll buy you a new necktie."

"The dickens take your neckties" would be my reply.

Whereupon with the philosophy of which he never wearied, Field would rejoin:

"Very well, if you won't let me buy you a necktie, you must buy me a lunch."

And off we would march to Henrici's coffee-house around the corner on Madison street, generally gathering Ballantyne and "Snip" in our train as we passed the kennel of the managing editor of what was to be the newspaper with the largest morning circulation in Chicago.

CHAPTER VIII

THE MOST PROMINENT ATHLETIC FAN

WHEN the history of this period in the life of the United States of America comes to be written, it will be incomplete if it does not record that some time about A.D. 1883 the national game of baseball developed a new species of human beings to be known as "fans." Before that the attendants on baseball games, and in fact on all sports, were called spectators. They went out to look on, to applaud, to cheer or to hiss the performers, equine or human as the case might be and as occasion might arise. Then they went home to supper and subsided into peaceable, peace-loving citizens again. While looking on no homicidal thoughts toward umpires or referee raged through their heads, nor did they fling scorching epithets and ginger-beer bottles at the baseball pitchers or players. Metropolitan newspapers assigned one man to "cover" the sporting events of the day, and the editor bade him cut his story short, especially for the Sunday paper, as space was valuable. In those days there were few sporting events on Sunday, and sermons by leading divines were "featured" Monday morning. There were Beechers and Talmages to make copy then.

But the baseball "fan" was just emerging from the chrysalis stage when Eugene Field came to Chicago, and he was so constituted by physical and mental characteristics as to catch the infection in its most virulent and persistent form. Physically the typical fan is a young person cheated by "dissembling nature" of the combination of muscles and temperament that makes indulgence in some form of com-

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petitive exercise necessary to the full enjoyment of life. Nature divides all boys into two classes—those who possess this combination and those who possess it not, the latter being by far the more numerous. As a rule your true fan is attracted to and becomes a partisan admirer of his favored fellow of superior physical endowments, and as baseball gradually asserted itself as the national sport and baseball parks became the arena where its players disported their prowess, the spectators became “rooters” and as the game progressed full-fledged fans. The baseball fan became a distinct species that grew to know, or think it knew, more of the fine points of the game than the players, whom every fan knew by name, or the umpires, whose epidermis had thickened to withstand the gibes of the players and the coördinated jeers of the fans.

Eugene Field's first claim to a high seat in the bleachers (including for the nonce the grand stand and boxes) will be found in his own confession in his *Auto-Analysis*:

“I dislike all exercise, and play all games indifferently.”

This was corroborated at school, in college and throughout his life. The only game he played better than indifferently was bowling, of which more anon. But he possessed the first qualification for a fan—the inordinate capacity to look on and enjoy the speed, skill and clash of wits of professional baseball players. To this was added his mental equipment to sit in judgment on what he saw and write reams of spicy comment on the sport of the Republic.

Moreover, Field was a partisan by nature and a hero worshiper without shame. When he crowned M. J. Kelly “King” of the diamond in 1883, the readers of the *Chicago Mornnig News* were never permitted to forget it so long as Field lived, and his column fairly dripped tears and brimstone when the Chicago club parted with the only Mike to Boston for a paltry \$10,000, which created more gossip than a quarter of a million would now. While its ranks were intact, there was no other baseball team within the

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four corners of the Union that could compare with the Chicago White Stockings; and it justified his enthusiasm by winning the National League pennant two successive years and only losing, through parting with Kelly, Clarkson, its great pitcher, and Gore, its fastest left-field, not to regain the coveted honor until 1906, when the combination Tinker to Evers to Chance appeared above the baseball horizon. How Field regarded such transactions may be judged from the following item in his "Sharps and Flats" column:

The Chicago baseball club has come into notice once more by giving up its old grounds on the lake shore and leasing a park on the West side of town. If the club had secured permanent quarters on the west side of the Iowa state line, nobody in Chicago would have complained. The truth is that Chicago is very much disgusted with her baseball club. Since it quit playing baseball and entered the auction trade our home club has ceased to be mentioned hereabouts, except with a contemptuous sneer.

That the young readers of these memoirs of the greatest baseball fan of them all may have some idea of the greatest team that ever stepped on a diamond, it may be permissible to quote from an interview with "King Kel" in the *New York Sun*, reprinted in A. G. Spalding's *America's National Game*:

In 1882 I was playing with the best ball team ever put together—the Chicagos. I bar no team in the world when I say that. I know about the New York Giants, the Detroits and the Big Four, the 1886 St. Louis Browns, and all of them, but they were never in it with the old 1882 gang that pulled down the pennant for Chicago. Then was when you saw ball playing, away up in the thirty-second degree. That was the crowd that showed the way to all the others. They towered over all ball teams like Salvator's record dwarfs all the other race horses. Where can you get a team with so many big men on its pay roll? There were seven of us six feet high—Anson, Goldsmith, Dalrymple, Gore, Williamson, Flint and

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myself being in that neighborhood. Larry Corcoran and Tommy Burns were the only small men on the team. Fred Pfeffer was then the greatest second baseman of them all. . . . Those old sports didn't know much about hitting the ball either; no, I guess they didn't. Only four of us had led the League in batting—Anson, Gore, Dalrymple and myself. . . . When we marched on a field with our big six-footers out in front it used to be a case of "eat 'em up, Jake." We had most of them whipped before we threw a ball.

If to the illustrious nine enumerated by "King Kel" there be added the names of Clarkson and McCormick, who joined them shortly after the year of which he wrote, there can be little informed dissent from his claim that the Chicago White Stockings, "who wore silk stockings" were the "best ever." Dan Bronthers, the giant first baseman of the Detroit, was the only batsman comparable with the big four mentioned.

As for Kelly himself, he outclassed his mates and was the baseball idol of his day as well as the nonpareil of Eugene Field's fan and pen worship. In the height of the baseball season I have known Field devote more than a score of paragraphs to the national game—a majority of which related to the prowess of Michael Kelly. His equal has never been repeated on the diamond. He was just short of six feet and weighed around 170 pounds, every pound of which was alert, from the tip of his toes to the crown of a head that was the despair of umpires. He was not exceptionally fast on his feet. Gore, a heavier man, could sprint around the four bases in record time, but for Kelly there were only three bases, and on occasion two, counting first and home in that order. When he left first base his next objective was third. Neither the rules nor the umpire could cope with Kelly, for he spent his time circumventing them, so that it is truthfully said that modern baseball rules and their interpretation might be known as the anti-Kelly code.

Perhaps the reader may think that I am devoting too

What I was drawing this ship & secure (and, by the way, it took down to do it) Ballantyne came in. "That's mighty good," said

he; "are you making it for New York?" "I understand that line has sailed out of town again, this time to Kansas

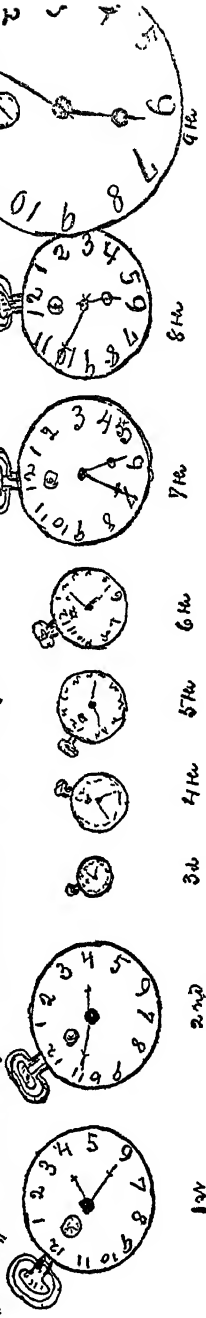
City. Poor man! his devil's devotion to the details of his newspaper is simply grinding the life out of him. Mr. Ballantyne

has arrived from Washington and also will go down to St. Louis with Julia and Mrs. Ballantyne next Monday morn-

ing. Later in the fall she will make no quite a visit.

Cover painted his watch today for \$40. ^{and he!}

\$30 to \$21 on the Chicago. This is the result by ninnings:



The watch retained its normal size for two ninnings. But in the third it shrunk so badly as to become hardly visible to the ninnings' eyes.

In the fourth ninnings, however, it began to pick up, and in the 7th it had resumed its natural shape, and in the 9th it was as

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much space to Eugene Field the baseball fan. But anyone who attempts to deal truthfully with the eccentric subject of this book and neglects the fan side of the author of the subjoined letter misses out on realizing an adequate portrait.

There are two or three independent stories embedded in this letter—the bedevilment of Mr. and Mrs. Peattie on their visit to Denver being worthy of Field's most exuberant days. Saving Cowen's young soul was one of his perennial avocations.

On May 11th, 1888, after "King Kel" had been sold to Boston, Field took stock of the whole baseball situation in this wise:

Four base hits and three runs is Mr. Mike Kelly's daily average just now. But this didn't save the Boston Baseball club yesterday. The Pittsburgh boys have always said that they could hit Clarkson's pitching, and they did hit his pitching yesterday numerous and effectively. And bad management helped to beat the visitors. We are glad that the Bostons were whipped. It ought to teach the management a lesson. Kelly is the only man in the club who can stand up to Clarkson's terrific delivery, yet Captain Morrell was idiotic enough to take chances with a catcher named O'Rourke. After nine runs had been scored in four innings Kelly was called in from the field and for the five other innings he held the Pittsburghs down to two runs. Boston simply threw away the game; good enough we say.

At Detroit the Philadelphias beat the champions by outbatting them. This seems incredible, yet it is true. The Detroit people are dreadfully disgusted with their players and we can imagine how warm they make it for the champions after one drubbing has been added to another. Detroit is as country a town as exists anywhere, and its ruralites are friends to its baseball representatives only when the sun shines.

The story of the Chicago meeting yesterday between the New Yorkers and our own nine is told in detail elsewhere in this paper. The game might have been either club's, so far as could be seen the nines were pretty evenly matched. Clarkson's absence was felt; the talk about Van Haltrin's being even an approach to Clarkson in any particular is the idlest rot. In the field the Chicagos played loosely and their seven errors cost them the game. It has been our opinion all along that if the Chicagos won two of this series of games with New York they would be getting off cheap.

The fielding elsewhere yesterday must have been above the average. The number of errors reported is as follows: Philadelphia 3, Detroit 3, Boston 4 and Pittsburgh 6. Washington and Indianapolis are too scaly for notice.

It will be perceived that Field confined his notice of the baseball world at that time to the National League, the

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revolt of the Brotherhood not having resulted in the formation of the American League.

Indicative of how beyond cure was Eugene Field's baseball infection may be cited one or two instances of how he returned to his first infatuation for "King Kel" in later years. Thus on June 28, 1888, in his "Sharps and Flats" we find this:

Benjamin Harrison is a good, honest, patriotic man and we like him. But he never stole second base in all his life, and he could not swat Mickey Welch's down curves over the left-field fence. Therefore we say again, as we have said many times before, that much as we revere Benjamin Harrison's purity and amiability, we cannot but accord the tribute of our sincerest admiration to that paragon of American manhood, Michael J. Kelly.

And so it came about that in 1893, when, according to some of his intellectual and spiritual admirers, the red blood in his arteries began to run blue, when "King Kel" essayed to pass from the diamond to the melodramatic stage, we find him ringing the bell with the same sure youthful touch as when we were first acquainted in this characteristic paragraph:

Surprise is expressed in certain quarters because Mike Kelly, the baseball virtuoso, has made a hit upon the dramatic stage. The error into which many people have fallen is in supposing that Kelly was simply a clever baseball machine. He is very much more than this. He is an unusually bright and intelligent man. As a class, baseball professionals are either dull brutes or ribald brutes; ignorance as dense as Egyptian darkness has seemed to constitute one of the essentials to successful baseball playing, and the average professional occupies an intellectual plane hardly above that of the average stall-fed ox or the fat pig at a country fair. Mike Kelly stands pre-eminent in his profession; no other baseball player approaches him. He is in every way qualified for a better career than that which is bounded on one side by the bleaching boards and on the other by the bar-room. Of course he is a good actor. He is too smart to attempt anything at which he does not excel.

Casting about for some sport that involved a minimum of effort and yet furnished the incentive of competition to make exercise, however slight, endurable, Field hit upon bowling. The result was that he located a bowling alley in the next block, another two blocks away, and a third on the corner of Clark and Superior Streets about a mile from

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the office and half-way on the road home. Then he inoculated Mr. Stone and Hawkins with the bowling fever; and



*Who is this graceful, agile King
In frond but modest garb revealed ?
He is the only Bowling King,
And loud and long the people sing
The prowess of Old Field.*

*How slender yet how lithe is he
And when unto the fray he glides
So awful is his majesty
That Krompy fears the wrath to be
And straightway runs and hides.*



May 27th, 1886.

FIELD'S BOWLING CHALLENGE

so we were all set for the championship of the *Daily News* staff, which the *Morning News* monopolized. I had played every manner of game known to the Saxon man from my

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boyhood, just as Field had sat on the side lines like a true American fan from his youth up, and so bowling was just the game for him. He could and did sit on the runway for the balls and keep up a running fire of comments on his opponents when it was their turn to roll. When it came his turn, he ambled to the alley with the largest finger ball his attenuated fingers could lift and with no more effort than was necessary to release the ball on the alley he let it slowly perambulate down to the head pin with just enough force to upset its equilibrium, while the others toppled over apparently without being touched. Never was there a bowler so quick to note and use the almost imperceptible inequalities of an alley. He knew that a slow ball would follow the slightest groove to the front pin and that is why he dropped the ball on the right spot and let the law of gravity take its course. Whenever he had finished his daily stunt, and felt so inclined, Field would send the boy to the adjoining room with some such challenge as is shown in facsimile on page 123.

It was about this time that our chief, Melville Stone, being asked what was his dearest wish at that particular instant replied unhesitatingly, "to beat Field and Thompson bowling." Two days before the date of the above challenge Field, Cowen, Hawkins and I indulged in a notable match which Field embalmed in one of his many colored box scores, in which he employed so many different colored inks that it is impractical of reproduction in facsimile. It was labeled:

RECORD OF THE GREAT MATCH GAME

OF

SKITTLES

May 27th, 1886

CHICAGO

Field called the game "skittles" because that is the name

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of the Dutch game from which it was derived as played by Rip Van Winkle in the Catskills before he took his twenty years' sleep. Of course Eugene adopted the ancient name because no one else did. The match in this particular game was Field and Hawkins versus Cowen and Thompson, five strings of 10 frames each. Field's score sheet shows that the latter team won by a total of 1684 pins to 1575, Field having the high total of 878 and only lost through Hawkins' indifferent rolling. Field averaged 175.60 per string, his best string being 231, scored naturally in red ink, as follows:

E. Field—	'18	'37	'57	"87	"117	"144	"164	'182	'202	"231
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Five strikes and five spares in ten frames is good bowling on any alley, and George Slosson's alleys at that time were not beyond reproach. It was years ere Field forgave Hawkins for his wretched bowling in this match, if ever he did. He railed at him on all occasions and never chose him for a partner again. But Field's roasting was all of the tongue or pen, although by iteration it sometimes became a trifle tedious to its object.

Next to baseball, fishing was the sport out of which Field got the most enjoyment. Not that he was a fish fan; far from it. But it brought him into close companionship with Izaak Walton and Kit North and the Ettrick Shepherd and the innumerable devotees of the rod and fly, the angleworm and the painted bob, the Indian with his torch and spear, the Gloucester fisherman and his quintal of dried salt codfish. Unlike Porthos in "Twenty Years After" Field did not regard "fishing as a vulgar pleasure" for from piscatorial literature he got inspiration for hundreds of paragraphs, but from sitting on a pier on the lake front, dangling his legs above the rippling tide, singing lullabies,

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he got more. And when he went to Spirit Lake for his summer vacation he fed me up with such fish diet as this:



The Good Smilet's Booty-

August 18th, 1885-

Spirit Lake, Iowa-

To understand Field's notions of what constitutes the complete fisherman, it would appear the part of discretion to let him speak for himself as he did in the following reflections in his column of May 12, 1888:

There are more ways of fishing than of skinning a cat [he wrote by way of opening the discussion]. We have never flayed a feline, although there have been hours in our life (dark, wakeful hours) when we felt as if we should take an all-absorbing delight in stripping a particular cat of that raiment with which nature provided her. Still, the old Yankee saying that "there are more ways than one of skinning a cat" has engendered in us a distinct conviction that there must be a good many ways; at any rate there are many ways of fishing. There is an old, old story—we don't know whether it originated with Poggio, or with Joe Miller, or with Democritus, Jr.—to the effect that a certain man did once upon a time make razors, and that this knave hearing somebody complain that the razors were useless for purposes of shaving, did, out of his full merrie and conceited jesting answer, "Marry, come up with a wanion, my good gossip, I make these razors to sell." So we are minded, upon seeing new-fashioned fishing tackle advertised and displayed for sale, so we are minded, we say, of the medieval miscreant who manufactured razors "to sell."

Men have made improvements in all other directions and in every other particular, but the pristine, the primeval, the original

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fish-pole has never been improved upon; solitary, but heroic, it looms up among the débris of time. It would be simple impertinence on our part to interpose any objection to anybody's fishing how, when and wheresoever he pleases, yet we never see a deluded mortal setting forth to buy a new and costly piscatorial outfit that we do not recall the old adage that has somewhat to say of "a fool and his money are soon parted."

The bob is a machine which is scoffed at by your nice fisherman, yet it is necessary to a complete enjoyment of the most delightful of avocations. The best bobs are manufactured in Missouri, in that part of the state where the poet has truly said—

*Potatoes they grow small
And they eat them, tops and all.*

and where the sullen bullhead forms the staple product of the murky lakes. Bobs are of exceeding antiquity. In his "As You Like It," the well-known but unidentified bard of Avon alludes to one who does not "seem senseless of the bob," and we read in one of William King's poems (1663) of a giant who fished with a bob—

*His hook he baited with a dragon's tail
And sat upon a rock and bobbed for a whale.*

The Missouri bob is made of exceeding light wood, hollow within and pierced perpendicularly with a buzzard's quill. That part of the bob which is designed to sink below the surface of the water is painted a light blue and that part upon which the angler is expected to rest his eye occasionally is painted a bright but pleasant red. The blue beneath blends harmoniously with the color of the water and the attention of the fish is not diverted thereby from the bait upon the hook below. The upper half of the bob should always differ in color from the water, otherwise the angler would not be able to determine immediately whether or not he had a bite. Red is a distinct color and there is no pleasanter sensation known to the fisherman than that which he experiences when he sees his red bob melting into an uncertain pink, which is sure to be the case when it is drawn slowly under the waves by a bass, a pickerel or a turtle.

The bob is a labor saving machine, and we bless the memory

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of that anonymous genius who invented this device which enables us to fish and read at the same time. And when we discourse of fishing, we discourse of fishing as a delightful recreation of men of intellect—not of that barbarous practice to which so many devote themselves with the brute vigor of a hired man who has undertaken a contract to saw a cord of green wood in three hours. Last summer we saw an old gray-haired man fishing around Lake Minnetonka; two men were rowing him hither and thither and he kept whipping the bosom of the lake with a forty-foot line that had a melodramatic tin minnow on the end of it. The oarsmen toiled away and sweat away—never daring to utter a word; and for four mortal hours that angler—old enough to know better—flagellated, spanked, larruped and fretted the bosom of the lake with that mimic minnow. That night the old gentleman complained of feeling ill; he feared that the Minnesota air enervated him. Four hours of flailing in a broiling sun would be likely to weary, if not enervate, the most robust individual. Fishermen of the heroic school have ever excited our scorn.

There are certain tools aside from pole, line, hook, bob and bait that are essential to successful fishing. One must be provided with cushions, an umbrella, a pail of ice water, a liberal lunch and a congenial book. Air cushions are the best, because they are not heating and a light blue or light green umbrella is the most desirable for the reason that it does not concentrate the heat rays of the sun. In the particular of lunch, tastes differ; salted and smoked meats, however, should be avoided as provoking thirst. Cold pigs' feet are invariably found to be grateful, and in case of accident the small joints of the ankle and the toes may be used for sinkers. In the matter of literature, too, tastes differ. We should recommend a divertive book, a volume of balladry, a Shakespeare jest book, or if one prefer, a collection of poems likely to put the reader's soul en rapport with the glories of nature around him.

The Compleat Angler, by Izaak Walton and his friend Cotton, makes especially charming reading; its most charming charms are its earnestness, its sincerity and its reverence, qualities always challenging admiration and respect, if not enthusiasm.

So reclining on cushions, protected from the ardor of Sol, with the attention divided between a delightful book and a red bob—what enjoyment would be keener or greater than that of the angler? A hired man propels the boat whither and

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when the angler directs. There is no wanton haste, no unseemly commotion. A becoming indolence broods over the boat, its occupants and the surrounding scene. An inviting location is selected, it should be a quiet spot sufficiently protected from the breeze to admit of the angler laying his book aside without incurring the danger of having its leaves blown together. The pleasantest fishing is the best fishing, and that part of a lake or stream which invites man has similar attractions—you can depend upon it—for the fish. So here we set our anchor, cast our lines, loll back upon our cushions, and open our books. An occasional furtive glance at the red bob is all the attention the fish require or expect, until the red bob begins to change color by means of its business connection with another party. No attention is demanded when the bob simply bobs up and down coquettishly in the water, for this performance is simply a symptom, or indication, or a suggestion either that minnows are nibbling at the bait or that a turtle is trying to sneak away with the worm without hurting the hook. But when the bob goes down, down, down, then is the time to put your book aside and lay hold of the pole, for a bass has seized upon the hook. It is at this supreme moment that the advantages of a strong pole and a cotton twine over an eight ounce rod and a silk thread assert themselves. We have seen able-bodied idiots spend twenty minutes landing a bass, a criminal waste of time. And what evil has this lively fish done to man that it should be tortured into helplessness before it is slain!

By a stout pull you bring the bass out of the water into the boat, and now you are called upon to exercise the most conscientious caution in taking away the bass from the hook. The bass that abound in these waters are provided with four sharp needles projecting from the head of the highly prized reptile; the fins are keen as razors and innumerable jagged horns appear in and around the nose, which is nostriled like a dog; the back of the bass is fat and of a purplish black hue; its under side is yellow; it has small, black, pin-head eyes, which are protected by lids, with long drooping lashes. As soon as the bass is in the boat it sets its horns and needles, inflates itself with oxygen, straightens out its fins, and assumes otherwise an aspect of unbridled ferocity. Inasmuch as it invariably swallows the hook, much time is saved and much danger averted by cutting the line above the sinker and putting on a new hook. Otherwise the utter dismemberment of the reptile

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becomes necessary, for when a bass swallows a hook it swallows it for keeps.

The bass is amphibious; that is to say, it will live either in or out of water. It has a distinct language of its own; sometimes it clearly articulates, "Don't, don't" when you seek to make it divulge the hook; at other times when you have both your feet on it, and are separating it from a stout limerick and two yards of twine, it as audibly says, "Rats! rats!" The Fox river is said to abound in bass of the most heroic character. The natives catch them with pieces of raw beef attached to a string, the conventional hook being regarded as superfluous. One night last summer an Aurora man was stung by a bass which he pulled out of the river near the watch factory, and he didn't get well until he went to Paris and was treated by Dr. Pasteur for hydrophobia.

There is a subtle mingling of reminiscence of those truant days when no country lad worth shucks did not steal away with birch rod, stout line, bob and hook to some hidden pool to catch anything with fins, and of the philosophizing Jacques lolling on the bank of time and stringing the reader along with most excellent fooling. But there was more truth than arrant philosophy in Field's attitude to the piscatorial art.

Only in its appeal to the ingrained combative spirit in man that enjoys any form of sport where some question of physical superiority is at stake is pugilism to be mentioned in the same breath with the sports in which Field took such a lively spectator's interest. It however has an almost irresistible attraction for a certain type of fans, who surrounded the gladiatorial arenas of Greece and Rome and to this day frequent the bull fights of Spain and countries inheriting its customs. Just as the Spartacus of Edwin Forrest attracted the fan in Eugene Field's uncombative nature, and he was only cured of his wish to take lessons in the manly art at Williams by an ill-timed blow from the instructor, so Field throughout his newspaper career kept

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in touch, mentally, with the doings of the prize ring from Jem Mace down to Corbett and Fitzsimmons. In this he only followed in the wake of leading politicians like Roscoe Conkling and leading journalists like his friend Charles A. Dana, who were always found at the ring side when any important mill was on. And so it came about that John L. Sullivan, the greatest prize fighter of his day, received frequent and often admiring attention in Field's column. Field delighted in telling stories of his prowess, but never condoned or glossed over his riotous career in which ferocity and drunkenness went hand in glove with a generous and loyal nature. Among these stories Field reported this one in "Sharps and Flats," September 28, 1895:

I don't believe I should care to have John L. Sullivan for a referee if I were either Corbett or Fitzsimmons [says William H. Crane]. Sullivan doesn't like to stand by and see any man whipped; his sympathies are always with the under dog.

Some years ago Nat Goodwin and I had an experience with Sullivan; it was in what I call my Halcyon days. Nat and I had been celebrating the close of the season, and we came ashore on Sunday morning from my yacht, determined to be very circum-spect all the rest of our lives.

We went to a seaside hotel for the purpose of getting breakfast, when whom should we fall in with but John L. Sullivan and one of his boon companions, a Boston alderman. Both John and his friend were pretty well corked up, and they insisted that we should go with them to call upon another friend, a Patsy Somebody, who was training for a fight with Mike Somebodyelse at a small country roadhouse about four miles away.

Goodwin and I did our best to shake the two, for we feared that, full of liquor as they were, Sullivan and his satellite would get us into trouble. But Sullivan wouldn't take no for an answer and finally, just to keep the peace, we went along in their wagon to visit the training grounds. Well, when we got there, Patsy and his trainer were having their usual morning bout. The trainer was a big broadshouldered, good natured Irishman—strong as an ox and good natured as a well fed child; he was a little too much for Patsy, and was giving him some pretty hard exercise. I suppose Sullivan fancied that the trainer was unnecessarily severe;

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at any rate I saw Sullivan's face grow darker and I knew that trouble was brewing. Finally Sullivan slipped off his coat and threw it over the back of a chair, then waiting till he saw the trainer advancing to attack Patsy with redoubled energy, suddenly Sullivan reached out that right arm of his and his big fist caught the good natured Irishman full on the mouth. It didn't look as if Sullivan put any force at all into the blow; it seemed to us as if he merely put out his fist—so—and let the other fellow run against it. But, gracious, you should have seen that Irishman keel over; I'll bet he went back twenty feet before he stopped; then he turned a back summersault over the hind wheel of our wagon and fell onto the ground apparently dead. He didn't regain consciousness for two hours, and you can imagine that those two hours were the most miserable Goodwin and I ever spent. We fancied ourselves forever disgraced by being pulled into court as witnesses, perhaps as accessories, to the killing of this innocent man. Our suspense was simply dreadful. Finally, however, after hunting up a doctor and working over the fellow for two hours the victim came to. The first thing he did was to put one hand feebly to his mouth as if to learn what damage that swollen orifice had sustained. And then, smiling amiably, he said, "Be jabers, that was a wicked thrust." You see he never lost his temper at all; as I have told you, he was the best natured fellow I ever saw.

But the honor of having been hit by Sullivan was too much for him. Having regained consciousness he proceeded to fill himself with liquor and it wasn't long before the rural constabulary had to be called to take him into custody. As he was a powerful creature and fought viciously, it became necessary to pound him into subjection, and by the time he was lodged in jail he was a bloody spectacle indeed. Next morning he was released, there being nobody willing to prosecute him, but even then he had not lost all sense of the great honor of having been hit by Sullivan, and so he hung about the jail all day, boasting of that honor and expressing an ambition to lick the combined constabulary force of the township.

I have never forgotten this incident [says Mr. Crane] and it suffices to convince me that, as a referee, Mr. Sullivan is hardly the person I should choose.

In "Sharps and Flats" of February 18, 1887, Field published the following parody on Tennyson's "Sir Galahad" under the title of "Sir Sullivan" attributing it to Lowell:

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SIR SULLIVAN

*My good fist belts the snoots of men,
My right arm puncheth sure,
My strength is as the strength of ten,
Because my whiskey's pure.
I smile to see a slugger nigh
And for the fray I quickly peel,
Then at his bread-basket let fly,
And make the duffer reel.
He reels, he gropes about the ropes,
And while his backers rub him down
Each thirsty bum fills up with rum
That freely flows in Boston town.*

It may not be generally known that it was not their mutual taste for the genuine in literature in contradistinction to the pretentious and brummagem that was the intrusive character of most that paraded itself in the literary periodicals of the 80's that drew Eugene Field and Julian Hawthorne into the close friendship that found such infectious expression in the latter's preface to *Culture's Garland*, Field's first book venture with an eastern publisher (1887). It was rather Field's attraction to the stalwart and athletic figure of Nathaniel Hawthorne's son. And Julian was attracted to Eugene by the latter's mirthfully identifying him as the author of his father's masterpieces. It was as an athlete that Julian was uppermost in Field's mind when in a paragraph written in December, 1885, he quoted Julian as a pupil of John C. Heenan, the champion prizefighter of his day, who encouraged him with the remark, "If you put yourself under my care, I'll guarantee that in less than two years you can lick any man in America." His father tore Julian away from such an alluring prospect, but Field refused to divorce him from athletic training and credited him with running 15 miles before breakfast every morning. In this connection he told the story of Hawthorne's excusing himself between courses at a luncheon for

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a moment or two, and when he returned, "a trifle flushed," explained that condition saying, "I have been taking a little spin out to Evanston and back. Your western roads are not so well gravelled as those I have been used to, or I would not be out of breath at all." This sort of exaggeration (Evanston being twelve miles from the scene of the luncheon) was a feature of Field's fancy at that time.

According to gossip, still rife at Williamstown, Field made a brief but ignominious essay at learning to box with an ex-pugilist, but when he ventured to take liberties with his instructor he ran into something hard and "the subsequent proceedings interested him no more" than the curriculum from which he shrank back to the gentle ministrations of Mrs. Tufts at Monson.

In short, Field was the typical American fan, so far as all forms of athletic sports went, but in very sooth in his hand the pen was mightier than the Indian club or bludgeon. The rapier of wit was his weapon of assault and with words of gentle humor he turned aside the wrath his wit provoked.

CHAPTER IX

EUGENE FIELD AND THE PLAYERS

EUGENE FIELD could not say with Hamlet:
Man delights not me, no, nor woman neither.

and no player who visited Denver or Chicago, whether he played the king or the adventurous knight, the lover or the clown, and no lady who played the queen, the heroine or the soubrette ever lacked his cordial welcome and his parting "Good Luck." Where his love for the stage was so omnivorous that "Seneca could not be too heavy, nor Plautus too light," he had his favorites among the individual players and among these it was "ladies first."

In point of time among the stars of the operatic stage, Christine Nilsson was probably the first to attract his eccentric admiration and the peculiar attentions which he delighted to pay his favorites. It was in 1882, when Mme. Nilsson had reached Omaha on her way west, that Field wrote to Marcus Meyer, her agent, who with her manager, Henry Abbey, was accompanying her in his special drawing-room car, for some particulars as to how the party was employing itself to wile away the tedium of the long trip. The reply was duller than the trip, except that it casually mentioned certain sittings at the American game of poker in which the Swedish soprano had the advantage or luck of her more sophisticated companions.

That was sufficient cue for Field and out of that inch of cloth he reconstructed for the *Tribune* more than an ell of most interesting gossip, such as would have gladdened the heart of P. T. Barnum had she been under the man-

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agement of that wily showman. The item as reconstructed reached San Francisco in time to be printed on the eve of her opening concert. Through the kindly offices of friends, jealous never to let anything of that sort escape the notice of its subject, the article was laid on Mme. Nilsson's dressing table. When her eye fell upon it she flew into one of those rages which were said to be the real tragedies of her life; and well she might, for she had been advised that the American public looked with anything but approving eyes on a woman who gambled.

On the return trip the party was to pass through Denver, and Abbey telegraphed ahead to Field, who with Cowen went up to Cheyenne to have an advance interview with the Madame. On entering the drawing room, the visitors were hustled into Abbey's compartment and hurriedly advised in whispers that Mme. Nilsson was furious against the *Tribune* and would never forgive anybody connected with it.

"Oh, I'll arrange that," said Field. "Don't announce us, but let us call on the Madame and be introduced."

After a brief parley Field's suggestion was adopted, and this is how he was greeted:

"Meestaire Field—zee *Trèebune!*" Madame Nilsson exclaimed hotly, "I prefer not zee acquaintance of your journal!"

"Excuse me, madam," persisted Field blandly and with specious earnestness, "I think from what Mr. Abbey has just told us that you are bent on doing the *Tribune* and its staff a great injustice. It was not the *Tribune* that published the poker story that has caused you so much just annoyance. It was our rival, the *Republican*, a very disreputable newspaper, which is edited by persons without the first instinct of gentlemen, and with no consideration for the feelings of a lady of your refined sensibilities."

As he proceeded Mme. Nilsson thawed visibly, and at

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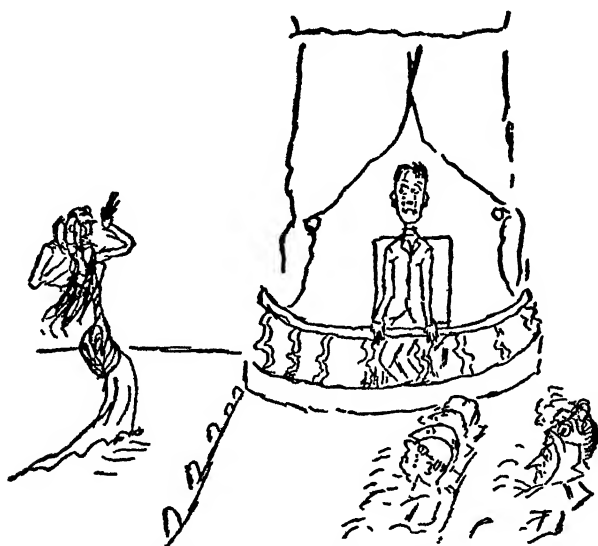
his closing words appealed to Messrs. Abbey, Mayer and Matthews as to whether she had been misinformed. Being in the conspiracy they assured her of the accuracy of Field's story, which she accepted with alacrity and was soon holding her sides with laughter over Field's drolleries. The Madame was not at home when the *Republican's* representative sent up his card in Denver, nor was she during her stay. On Christmas Eve, being the second night of her visit, Madame gave a Christmas tree party in the Windsor Hotel, with Field playing the rôle of Santa Claus and the *Tribune* staff acting the parts of the good little boys, while their rivals of the *Republican* were not so much as invited to share the crumbs that fell from that Christmas supper table.

While Christine Nilsson was the first of the operatic stars to come within the circle of Field's capricious attentions, it was to Madame Helena Modjeska that he gave the first place in his affectionate regard, in private life and an unending paragraphic devotion. For almost a score of years, the doings, sayings and fortunes of the Madame and her always vivacious and enjoyable husband were the subjects of his kindest wit and oddest humor. "I have been a great theatre-goer," says Field in his *Auto-Analysis*. When Modjeska came to town, he was a constant one. Her "Camille," a character in which she was not excelled by the "Divine Sara" herself, had a remarkable vogue in the early 80's. She imparted to its emotional impersonation the subtle charm of her own pure womanliness, which served to excuse Armand's infatuation and as far as possible lifted the play out of its unwholesome atmosphere of French immorality to the plane of romantic devotion and self-sacrifice. Her "Camille" seemed a victim of a remorseless destiny, a pure soul struggling amid inexorable circumstances that racked and cajoled a diseased and suffering body into the maelstrom of sin. And yet it avoided the heart-rending effect created by the realistic acting of that great emotional

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actress Clara Morris, who starred in the rôle about the same time.

Field was so constituted that without Modjeska's saving grace of womanliness the presentation of "Camille" would not have attracted him to a second performance. But with her in the title rôle he scarcely missed a night, seated in the front row or a box. So seated, his presence could not be



FIELD WITNESSING MODJESKA AS CAMILLE

From a drawing by Eugene Field

overlooked from the stage. Wherever he sat, his large, pallid, solemn visage had a fascination for Madame Modjeska, so that she involuntarily played "at him" and he responded with a play of features expressing contrary emotions to those that should follow the dramatic scene which she was interpreting. When we went to visit her next day, as we usually did, she hardly ever failed to reproach him in some such fashion as: "Ah, Meester Fielt, why will you seet in the box and talk with your overcoat on the chair to



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make poor Camille laugh who is dying on the stage! Ah, Meester Fiel, you are a very bad man, but I lof you, don't we, Charlie?" The count always stopped rolling a cigarette long enough to admit that Field was their dearest friend and that they both loved him no matter what he did. Next to his wife, the count was devoted to politics, which he discussed with the gesticulations of a Parisian journalist and the Intelligence of a Polish-American patriot. Until Ignatius Paderewski developed into the political leader of his countrymen, Count Bozenta was the best-informed Pole I ever met.

Madame Modjeska frequently insisted on Field's giving his imitation of herself in "Camille" for the entertainment of her friends in her suite in the old Palmer House (being rebuilt as this is written). On such occasions she would give the cues for selected passages and his impassioned, "Armo, I lof, I lof you!" never failed to convulse her, while his pulmonary cough was so sepulchral that it rang through the corridors, so that passing guests were led to believe that Modjeska herself was in the last stages of the disease she simulated so vividly nightly. With a clear appreciation of the intimate friendship between Modjeska and Field and his own unbounded admiration for her art, the reader is prepared to enter into the spirit of the stanza in Field's "Modjeska as Cameel" that culminates where Armand "gives the girl the shake" and when she hollers, "Armo! Armo!" flings her on the floor—and

*At that Three-Fingered Hoover says, "I'll chip into this game
And see if Red Hoss Mountain cannot reconstruct the same.
I won't set by an' see the feelin's uv a lady hurt.
Gol darn a critter, anyhow, that does a woman dirt!"
He riz up like a giant in that little painted pen,
And stepped upon the platform with the women folks 'nd men;
Across the trough of gaslights he bounded like a deer,
An' grabbed Armo an' hove him through the landscape in the rear;
And then we seen him shed his hat an' reverently kneel
An' put his strong arms tenderly around the gal Cameel."*

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Leaving Armo sailing "through a vista ten miles long," this narrative must hurry along to a day in April, 1886, when at a breakfast given to Modjeska at Kinsley's famous restaurant, whence Gustave Bauman, the predecessor of John McE. Bowman of the Biltmore chain of hotels graduated, Field embalmed his sentiment for our guest in the now familiar lines:

TO HELENA MODJESKA

*In thy sweet self, dear lady guest, we find
Juliet's dark face, Viola's gentle mien,
The dignity of Scotland's martyr'd queen,
The beauty and the wit of Rosalind.
What wonder, then, that we who mop our eyes
And sob and gush when we should criticize,
Charmed by the graces of your mien and mind,
What wonder we should hasten to proclaim
The art that has secured thy deathless fame.
And this we swear: We will endorse no name
But thine alone to old Melpomene,
Nor will revolve, since rising sons are we,
Round any orb, save, dear Modjeska, thee,
Who art our Pole star, and will ever be.*

In the manuscript of this tribute as first written, the rhymes of the first four lines fell alternately, being transposed so that they ran in order first, third, fourth and second of the poem as it appears above. The fifth and sixth lines of his first version ran as follows:

*What wonder, then, that we who mop our eyes
When we are hired to rail and criticize?*

The reader can decide for himself whether the poet's second thought was an improvement. Field originally contemplated a longer poem, but after having written a fourteenth line reading—

The radiant Pole star of the mimic stage

he concluded to end it there as in the finished version.

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Upon the back of the sheet of ruled notepaper on which these lines to Modjeska were written, endorsed in ink "Original Manuscript," I find this fragment:

*The things of life
A little sour, a little sweet,
Fill out our brief and human hour
..... meet*

And that Sapphic fragment is the nearest Eugene Field ever came to discussing with saint or sinner the why and wherefore—the whence and whither—of our brief human hour.

Far different were the sentiments that stirred Eugene Field to compose verses in praise of Emma Abbott, such as those printed in another chapter. Her appeal was to his sense of the absurdity and incongruity of basing a stage career on domestic virtues. Miss Abbott's artistic qualifications were scarcely above the level of the requirements of a church sociable. Her voice was slight but of good quality and her dramatic expression disarmingly juvenile. Field's review of an imaginary biography of Miss Abbott entitled, "Ten Years a Songbird: Memoirs of a Busy Life," once filled a column in his "Sharps and Flats" and is one of his happiest pieces of satirical fiction.

The style is so unconscious [runs the so-called review] that at times it really seems as if, attired in a wrapper and slippers, the fair narrator were lolling back in an easy chair talking these things into your friendly ear.

Miss Abbott is a lady for whom we have had for a number of years—ever since her début as a public singer—the highest esteem. She is one of the most conscientious of women in her private walk, conscientious in every relationship and duty and practice that go to make the sum of her daily life. This conscientiousness, involving patience, humility, perseverance, and integrity, has been, we think, the real secret of her success.

Without permitting a suggestion of irony to disturb the saintly tenor of the fiction, Field went on to tell how at

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the moment of Miss Abbott's "birth a strangely beautiful bird fluttered down from a pear-tree, alighting upon a window sill, and caroled forth a wondrous song, hearing which the infant (*mirabile dictu*) turned over in its crib and accompanied the winged songster's melody with an accurate second alto. This incident Miss Abbott repeats as one of the many legends bearing upon her infancy; but, with that admirable practical sense so truly characteristic of her, she adds: 'Of course, I repose no confidence in this story. I have always taken this bird's tale *cum grano salis*.' "

Throughout this review of a purely imaginary biography, Field manages to burlesque both its subject and the pretentious style of a large part of what passes as contemporaneous literary criticism. Between the thoroughly liberal Polish actress and the super-prudish American songster, Field paid his paragraphic attentions to a whole host of more or less popular feminine stage celebrities of the time. On the operatic stage Madame Marcella Sembrich was easily his favorite prima donna. She was petite, plump and vivacious and had a voice of liquid flexibility that appealed to Field's love of those Lydian airs whose notes could untwist—

. . . all the chains that tie
The hidden soul of harmony.

Therefore there was more sincerity than usual in his amusing comment on her appearance in Chicago in "Lucia," January 24, 1884, when he wrote:

It is not at all surprising that Madame Sembrich caught on so grandly night before last. She is the most comfortable-looking prima donna that has ever visited Chicago. She is one of your square-built, stout-rigged little ladies with a bright honest face and bouncing manners. . . . Her audience was a coldly critical one, of course, and it sat like a bump on a log until Sembrich made her appearance in the mad scene where Lucheer gives her vocal circus in the presence of twenty-five Scotch ladies in red, white and green

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dressess, and twenty-five supposititious Scotch gentlemen in costumes of the court of Louis XIV. Instead of sending for a doctor to assist Lucheer in her trouble, these fantastically attired ladies and gentlemen stand around and look dreary while Lucheer does grand and lofty tumbling, and executes pirouettes and trapeze performances in the vocal art. Then the audience began to wake up. . . . When she finally struck up high F sharp in the descending fourth of D in alt, one gentleman from the South Side, who had hired a dress coat for the occasion, broke forth in a hearty "Brava!" This encouraged a resident of the North Side to shout "Bravissimo!" and then several dudes from the Blue Island district raised the cry of "Bong," "Tray beang" and "Brava!" The vast audience seemed crazed with delight and enthusiasm. Even the pork merchants and grain dealers in the family circle vied with each other in hoarsely wafting Italian words of cheer at the triumphant Sembrich. One man was put out by the ushers because he so far forgot himself and the *éclat* of the occasion as to shout in vehement German: "Mein Gott in Himmel das ist ver tampt goot!"

It was an ovation, but it was no more than Sembrich deserved—bless her fat little buttons.

Such freedom of mingling genuine musical enthusiasm with the vernacular of the unsophisticated West may startle the sedate readers of this narrative, but they must remember that this was forty years ago, before Field had settled down to the necessity of assuming a literary gravity he never possessed. It was his way of expressing his appreciation of a truly great operatic artist, and she accepted it at its true worth.

In the pirated edition of "The Mikado" given in Chicago in 1885, Field found the best Koko and Yum Yum ever seen on the American stage. Of Miss Alice Harrison's "Yum Yum" he wrote, "She has set the standard of that interesting rôle and it is a high one. In fact we doubt whether it will ever be approached by any other artist on the American stage."

Nor has it been. Subsequent performances of "The Mikado" in the United States by D'Oyley Carte's author-

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ized company, "compared with that of the Roland Reed company, were like water after wine."

Another light-opera singer of that period, Mrs. Jessie Bartlett Davis, enjoyed Field's admiring friendship and inspired more than one of his lilting songs. As Miss Jessie Bartlett she had won popular attention as a choir contralto and graduated from church singing into light opera through the Gilbert and Sullivan cycle of operas and finally attained national recognition with the Boston Ideal Opera Company in "Robin Hood." Her beautiful face, figure and voice carried her far, and she only fell short of a great career because she lacked dramatic expression. She sang several of Field's lullaby songs with charming effect. Among these was the following:

A HUSHABY SONG

*The stars are twinkling in the skies,
The earth is lost in slumber deep—
So hush, my sweet, and close your eyes
And let me lull your eyes to sleep;
Compose thy dimpled hands to rest,
And like a little birdling lie
Secure within thy cozy nest
Upon my mother breast,
And slumber to my lullaby.
So hushaby, oh, hushaby.*

*The moon is singing to the star
The little song I sing to you,
The father Sun has strayed afar—
As baby's sire is straying, too,
And so the loving mother moon
Sings to the little star on high,
And as she sings, her gentle tune
Is borne to me, and thus I croon
To thee, my sweet, that lullaby
Of hushaby, oh, hushaby.*

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*There is a little one asleep
That does not hear his mother's song.
But angel-watchers as I weep
Surround his grave the night-tide long;
And as I sing, my sweet, to you,
Oh, would the lullaby I sing—
The same sweet lullaby he knew
When slumbering on this bosom, too—
Were borne to him on angel wing.
So hushaby, oh, hushaby.*

In another poem inscribed, "To Jessie Bartlett Davis on the first anniversary of her little boy's birth, October 6th, 1884," occurs this touching concluding verse:

*Oh, mother-love, that knows no guile,
That's deaf to flattery, blind to art,
A dimpled hand hath wooed thy smile—
A baby's cooing touched thy heart.*

For Mrs. Davis' husband, Will J. Davis, for years one of the leading theatrical managers in the West, Field cherished a deep attachment that began in the 70's and endured to the end. For a score of years Field marked the constancy of that friendship by the string of paragraphs lively and absurd he hung about his friend's personal and professional neck. Mr. Davis in his prime was what in the vernacular of boys and tailors' "ads" is known as an elegant dresser, which was nuts to Field, in such verse as that "To Will J. Davis' Vest," which follows:

*Of waistcoats there are divers kinds, from those severely chaste
To those with fiery colors dight or with fair figures traced;
Those that high as liver-pads and chest protectors serve,
While others proudly sweep away in a substomachic curve.
But the grandest thing in waistcoats in the streets in this great and
wondrous West,
Is that which folks are wont to call the Will J. Davis vest.*

And so on for forty lines or more Field proceeded to

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glorify the "comeliness of this paragon of vests" in every hue or color that his amazing vocabulary could suggest, and wound up the whole with the touch of sentiment to redeem the rigmarole, to wit:

*But better yet, dear William, than the garb of which I sing
Is a gift which God has given you, and that's a priceless thing.*

.

*One thing, and one alone, survives old Time's remorseless test,
The valor of a heart like that which beats beneath that vest.*

Who would not stand in the pillory of Field's friendly gibes and jokes for many a column to be held in such sweet remembrance in the benediction?

Returning to the record of the fair damozels at whose shrine Field was wont to lay or fling his gibes and posies with impartial friendship, there was Kate Claxton of what New Yorkers will remember as the Union Square Theater, of which Shook & Palmer were the managers, Charles H. Thorne, Jr., was the star, and such plays as "The Banker's Daughter," "The Two Orphans," "The Celebrated Case," and "The Danicheffs" were the great popular successes. Miss Claxton was endowed with a superb shock of Titian red hair, and when her starring tour was marked by several narrow escapes from fires, the wits of the day ascribed them to the warmth of her art and the color of her hair. The combination afforded Field the opportunity to indulge in his favorite fancy of fictitious biography, as follows:

BIOGRAPHY OF KATE CLAXTON

This famous conflagration broke out May 3d, 1846, and has been raging with more or less violence ever since. She comes of a famous family, being a lineal descendant of the furnace mentioned in scripture history as having been heated seven times hotter than it could be heated, in honor of the tripartite alliance of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. One of her most illustrious ancestors performed in Rome on the occasion of the Emperor Nero's famous

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violin obligato, and subsequently appeared in London when a large part of that large metropolis succumbed to the fiery elements. This artist is known and respected in every community where there is a fire department, and the lurid flames of her genius, the burning eloquence of her elocution and the calorific glow of her consummate art have acquired her fame, wherever the enterprising insurance agent has penetrated. Mrs. O'Leary's cow vainly sought to rob her of much of her glory, but through the fiery ordeal of jealousy, envy and persecution, has our heroine passed, till, from an incipient blaze, she has swelled into the most magnificent holocaust the world has ever known. And it is not alone in her profession that this gifted adustion has amazed and benefitted an incinerated public; to her the world is indebted for the many fire-escapes, life-preservers, salamander safes, improved pompier ladders, play house exits, standpipes and Babcock extinguishers of modern times. In paying ardent homage, therefore, to this incandescent crematory this week, let us recognize her not only as the reigning queen of ignition, diathermancy and transcalency, but also as the promoter of many of the ingenious and philanthropic boons the public now enjoys.

One other of the stars of lesser magnitude who rose and reigned their brief hour in Field's stage world must close this recital of the many friendships he made among the sex whose charms and superior virtues he never tired paragraphing. Marie Jansen filled Field's ideal of what a singing comedienne should be. She was petite and well-favored and, as Francis Wilson has well said, "was gifted with an appealing stage presence." He also testifies to her modest and sensitive nature and that she has "a real love of the written word." On the stage she was a most captivating personality and her singing of the song "Ohe Mama" caught the public of the time as only an occasional favorite does. Field caught the fever of the day and wrote many verses in her honor. And years after, when memory brought back the thoughts of those undyspeptic days he dedicated a poem in unusual meter to her, the first and last stanzas of which ran:

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TO MARIE JANSEN

I

*'Tis years, soubrette, since last we met;
And yet—ah yet, how swift and tender
My thoughts go back in time's dull track
To you, sweet pink of female gender!
I shall not say,—though others may,—
That time all human joy enhances;
But the same old thrill comes to me still
With memories of your songs and dances!*

.

VI

*And lo! tonight, the phantom light,
That as a sprite, flits on the fender,
Reveals a face whose girlish grace
Brings back the feeling, warm and tender;
And all the while, the old time smile
Plays on my visage, grim and wrinkled,—
As though, soubrette, your footfalls yet
Upon my rusty heartstrings tinkled.*

Even the meter of this poem to Miss Jansen was reminiscent of one I picked up in San Francisco, many years before I met Field, of which he was very fond. The first stanza ran thus and the reader can trace the lilting rhythm:

*O Chemisette! the fairest yet
That e'er hid bosom fairer, whiter!
Thou dost not know what envious woe
Thy veiling snow hath given the writer!
So trimly frilled, so plumply filled,
And then the eyes that shine above it!
I burn—I long—nor is it wrong,
(At least in song) dear girl, to love it.*

Perhaps if Ambrose Bierce were still alive, he could name the author of this which appeared in the *Argonaut* or *News Letter* when he flourished on the Pacific Coast.

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Cut off a very different piece was Field's friendly admiration for Miss Maggie Mitchell, who for a full generation enjoyed popular favor, especially among the young, in the title rôle of "Fanchon, the Cricket." Its lively nature can be best realized from the following lines to

FANCHON, THE CRICKET

*My grandsire, years and years ago,
In round old English used to praise
Sweet Maggie Mitchell's pretty ways
And her fair face that pleased him so.*

*Her tuneful voice and curly hair,
Her coquetry and subtle art
Ensnared my grandsire's willing heart
And ever reigned supremely there.*

*In time, my father felt the force
Of cunning Maggie Mitchell's smiles
And, dazzled by her thousand wiles,
He sang her glories, too, of course.*

*Quite natural, then, it was that I—
Of such a sire, and grandsire, too—
When this dear sprite first met my view,
Should learn to rhapsodize and sigh.*

*And now my boy, of tender age,
Indites a sonnet to the curl
Of this most fascinating girl
That ever romped the mimic stage.*

*O, prototype of girlhood truth,
Of girlhood glee and girlhood prank—
By what good fortune hast thou drank
The waters of perennial youth!*

To appreciate the four generations of this poetic pleasantry, the youthful reader should remember that Miss

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Mitchell was born in 1832, was carried on the stage as a baby, played speaking parts when five years old, made her début as Julia in "The Soldier's Daughter," played in the first production of "Fanchon" in 1860, and must have been well over fifty when Field penned these lines. Age had not tamed her cricket ways then and she lived to the good old age of eighty-six, being a source of pleasure to thousands for three-quarters of a century.

But now we must turn to Field's associates of the masculine gender in whose companionship he found that "comradeship" which Roswell Field well said "was the indispensable factor" in his brother's life. It was on this indispensable comradeship that he leaned through his creative years from 1875 to 1890 and from which he drew the cheerful spirit that pervaded his life. First among these, and to the last his foremost and firmest friend, was Edward D. Cowen, who has been introduced already to the reader. Then among his early associates came William C. Buskett, the hero of "Penn Yan Bill," to whom he dedicated "Casey's Table d'Hôte."

*He came from old Montana and he rode a broncho mare,
He had a rather howd'y'do and rough-and-tumble air.*

*A rather strapping lover for our little Susie—still
She was his choice and he was hers, was Penn Yan Bill.*

But in this chapter we are particularly discussing Field's most intimate friends among stage folk. Of these there were four or five to whom it would be hard, not to say invidious, to award the palm all coveted. If the choice were left to Field himself we have the decision ready made in the dedication in a Japan paper copy of the *Second Book of Verse*:

*Writing the names of those I love the best
Lo, Francis Wilson's name leads all the rest,
As let this gift of mine to him attest.*

EUGENE FIELD AND THE PLAYERS

With fine instinct Wilson promptly abdicated the seat of honor in these words: "It is not easy to resign first place in the affection of a man like Field, but candor compels me to say that I believe he had a greater regard for Sol Smith Russell than for any of his many friends in the dramatic profession. I was a little more intimate in a bookish way, perhaps." And then Mr. Wilson added the sentence that should have precluded the writer from sitting in judgment in this nice question: "Among his journalistic friends, no one surely was nearer and dearer to him than Slason Thompson. It was through him that Field published in the magazine *America*, with which Thompson was associated, "Little Boy Blue," which, swifter than anything Field ever wrote, went to the hearts of the people and brought the author the fame he deserved." In the face of such appreciative words, the impartial journalist within me rises to agree with Wilson's judgment without any dubious "perhaps" to cast a shadow on Mr. Wilson's title to stand easily first in the long life of Field's bookish intimates. It was only in the days when men meant more than books that the attraction of like for like drew Field and Sol Smith Russell into the closest personal friendship. They were more than complementary to each other. The accent of New England lingered on their tongues and New England humor ran through their veins and tintured all their thoughts. The *New England Primer* was the fountain of their theology and the hymns of Isaac Watts were as celestial music to their ears and had the true roll of Puritan fervor in their melodious voices.

Elsewhere I have noted differences in these New England Dromios that merely added to their similarities. On the clean-shaven face of Field the muscles softened into smiles or hardened into frowns obedient to his will. Whereas on the equally clean-shaven features of Russell the smile broke involuntarily, as if that were its natural playground, and a genuine frown never came.

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Field's "Our Two Opinions," written in imitation of Whitcomb Riley's Hoosier manner, was dedicated to Sol Smith Russell, who recited it with such force and pathos as to win from Henry Irving, before he annexed the Sir, the comment that it was the greatest piece of American characterization he had ever witnessed. Field's recitation only lacked the indescribable pathetic touch of the actor of being as fine a characterization.

Whenever Russell came to Chicago, they were inseparable except when he was asleep or on the stage. Their chief delight was exchanging anecdotes ("swopping yarns") of New England life and character. They talked over Field's New England verses and stories, tried them on each other and settled on their proper delineation. Many a night after midnight have I sat with John A. Rice, of bibliomaniac fame, in the rotunda of the old Tremont Hotel, of which he was the lessee, listening to their stories that smacked of salt codfish and chewing gum and checkerberry lozenges, interrupted by occasional requests of the "scrub ladies" that entertainers and audience move to the other side of the lobby. Between the two of them they elaborated two stories that have been heard in every town in the Union where Russell has played or Field read: "The Teacher of Ettyket" and "The Old Deacon and the New Skule House." Originally they belonged in Russell's repertory, but by virtue of numerous verbal changes Field established a first lien upon both stories. Would that I could recall the exact phrasing of either, which changed like the figures in a kaleidoscope with every recital. The Deacon's speech against the new school house opened with the emphatic declaration, "Fellow citizens, I'm agin this yer noo skule house." Then he proceeded to say that "the little old red skule house was good enuff fur them as cum afore us, it was good enuff fur us, an' I reckon it's good enuff fur them as cum arter us." With that the speaker would refresh himself with a generous mouthful of loose tobacco.



SOL SMITH RUSSELL

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Next he told how he had never been to school more than a few weeks "atween seasons, an' yet I reckon I kin mow my swarth with the best of them that's full of book-larnin' and all them sort of jim-cracks." He then proceeded to illustrate the uselessness of "book-larnin'" by referring to the case of "Dan'l Webster, good likely a boy ez wus raised in these parts, what's bekum ov him? Got his head full of redin', cifren and book-larnin'. What's bekum ov him, I say? Went off to Boston and I never hearn tell ov him arterwards!"

Here Russell ended his disgust by plentiful, not to say profuse, expectoration of the supposititious juice that almost drowned out his emphatic "NO" on the revolutionary proposal. Field, on the contrary, wiped the overflow from the corners of his mouth, until the laugh over Webster's disappearance in Boston subsided, and, as an afterthought, mumbled: "By the way, I did hear somebody tell Dan'l had written a dictionary on a bridge, huh!"

But Field's attentions to Russell did not end with their personal association. Weird and apocryphal stories about the gentle comedian capered through the "Sharps and Flats" column on every occasion and without occasion. At one time Field had Russell on the easy street to a presidential nomination on the Prohibition ticket. Then, with infinite particulars, he told of the generous donations that Russell was making to philanthropic objects, resulting in their donor being pestered with applications for money for all sorts of institutions. To provide Russell with the wherewithal to meet these calls for unlimited largess, Field endowed him with a touch beyond the dreams of Midas. If the matchless impersonator of "Shabby Genteel,"

Too proud to beg, too honest to steal,

bought a lead mine, it yielded tons of virgin gold in the quartz. If he dug for water, he struck diamonds. When

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Russell ordered oysters on the half shell, he couldn't enjoy the succulent bivalves for the fresh water pearls as large as filberts that deflected his fork. One specimen will illustrate the freedom with which Field bestowed fortune on his best friend:

Sol Smith Russell's luck is almost as great as his art. Last week his little son Bob was digging in the back yard of the family residence in Minneapolis, and he developed a vein of coal big enough to supply the whole state of Minnesota with fuel for the next ten years. Mr. Russell was away from home at the time, but his wife (who has plenty of what the Yankees call faculty) had presence of mind not to say anything about the "Find" until, through his attorneys, she had secured an option on all the real estate in the locality.

With this patchwork story of the David and Jonathan relations between these two New England types, there is a flavor of Field's love of antithesis in his dedication of "Our Two Opinions":

*He havin' his opinyun uv me
'Nd I havin' my opinyun uv him
A-hatin' each other through 'nd through*

to Sol Smith Russell, when

They loved each other through and through

Books—first editions—if possible the only copy, or at least No. 1, were the bonds that bound Eugene Field to Francis Wilson in their inseparable bibliomaniac coils. Field recognized in Wilson a comedian of extraordinary artistic intelligence. A student of the mimic art from the outside in contradistinction to the actor with the natural face, gestures and gait of comedy. There was nothing of the natural comedian about Wilson but his legs, and upon these Field seized with the unerring instinct of a born tease to herald Wilson's fame throughout the Republic. And

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this is one of a hundred ways in which he made those innocent legs famous:

We regard Mr. Francis Wilson's legs as the greatest curiosities on the American stage at the present time. We call them curiosities when perhaps we should term them prodigies.

The truth is, they are so versatile, so changeful, that we hardly know what epithet could be applied to them most properly. They are twins, yet totally unlike, reminding one of the well mated man and wife, who are so different that we speak of them as well matched. The left leg is apparently of serious turn, as may be observed on all occasions requiring a portrayal of those emotions which bespeak elevated thought and philosophical tendencies. The right leg is mercurial, obliquitous, passionate to a marked degree, whimsical, fantastic and grotesque. The contrast between the two gives us comedy in itself, which is very pleasing, for the constant struggle between the perennial levity of the right leg and the melancholy demeanor of the left leg is funnier by far than most of the horse-play which passes for comedy in these times.

*While one with sad emotion throbs
And wildly palpitates,
The other makes its grievous sobs
And loudly cachinnates.
While this one jigs along the floor
Intent on noisy pleasure,
The other treads the carpet o'er
In many a stately measure.*

The combination is a happy one. The left leg pleases the serious-minded, sentimental, and the lovers of the emotional style of dramatic art; the right leg solaces those who believe there is nothing more enjoyable than mirth. Here we find two legs capable of every variety of action. They can shake you out a jig or stride you a minuet; they can sob plaintively or titter hysterically; they can strut imperiously, or wobble ludicrously; they can suggest a spondaic pentameter of the best old classic poets or a bit of modern doggerel from *Puck*. Their name is "Versatility," and in them we find the passions clearly defined and deftly combined.

Now having read this paragraph from his daily stunt in "Sharps and Flats" for the enjoyment of its worth, let the

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reader examine it word by word as a compact specimen of the resilient English Field daily laid before the subscribers of the *Morning Record*. From start to finish there is not a wobble in the use of a noun, verb, adjective or comma. Only such an approach to the perfect use of our mother tongue was possible to one who had drank deep of the English undefiled of the early British bards.

To return to Francis Wilson's legs, as Field distorted them for the gayety of raillery at the expense of their owner, the wonder is that he did not indulge in a treatise of the comparative anatomy of legs, such as marked the discussion of the "Hamlets" he had seen, included in his *Culture's Garland*, which passed in review the "pedal extremities of Edwin Forest, Edwin Booth, Charles Fechter, Lawrence Barrett, Henry Irving, Wilson Barrett, Miss Anna Dickinson and George C. Miln, a Chicago pastor who forsook the pulpit to sport the sock and buskin in "Hamlet." In such a comparative test, the description shows that Francis Wilson's easily would have "led all the rest."

How the humor of Field's paragraph in "damned iteration" wherever he appeared in his tours throughout the country finally palled on Wilson's enjoyment, is shown in his *Life of Himself* where he says that "it would have been a great relief if only some paragrapher had discovered the truth under Field's delicious humor, discovered it was the skill of the owner of those Adonis-like under-pinnings that made them put an antic curvature on as occasion demanded. It was so simple. As the twist of an expression may make literature or bosh, so may the turn of an ankle give us 'Versatility,' as Field called it, or a sprain."

But the intimate association of Field and Wilson in the "bookish way" was soon to put all thoughts of legs and such migratory things out of their minds. It was toward the close of 1889, after I had numbered, initialed and mailed the last copies of *A Little Book of Western Verse* and



FRANCIS WILSON

1900.

EUGENE FIELD AND THE PLAYERS

A Little Book of Profitable Tales, that I received the following note, with enclosure:

DEAR SIR:

Enclosed find my check for \$20 (Twenty dollars) for No. 1 copy of Mr. Eugene Field's proposed book of "Horace"—printed on Japanese proof and pasted on Whatman's handmade paper, with etched vignettes, initial and tail-pieces, rubricated throughout.

Very truly,
FRANCIS WILSON.

This was the first I knew of the proposed publication of *Echoes from the Sabine Farm*, which the two bibliomaniacs had conspired that I should undertake as I had undertaken the two Little Books. In acknowledging the receipt of Mr. Wilson's check I ventured to question whether the paraphrases of Horace up to that time warranted the elaborate setting proposed. To this I received this prompt rejoinder:

PHILADELPHIA, December 27, 1889

Mr. Slason Thompson

REVEREND SIGNOR:

It is Mr. Field's intention to produce a Horace at \$20 a copy, the edition limited to fifty; printed on Japanese proof and pasted on Whatman's hand-made paper; rubricated throughout, with etched vignettes and tail-pieces, and I want copy No. 1. Sometimes even the swift citizens of Chicago must get their information from slow-going Philadelphia. I do not know whether it is Mr. F.'s intention to have you get out his affectionate effort, but I should hope not—being guided, of course, by your expressed doubt and wonderment in the matter. However, I promise not to say anything about this to Mr. Field. I sent you the \$20 so as to be in time for the copy I wish, and I know you'll not object to holding it until Mr. Field's return, which ought to be not later than May—as he writes. I shall also send you other subscriptions, which you may turn over to Mr. Hobart Taylor (Chatfield-Taylor) in the event of your discovering that gentleman has fewer qualms of conscience than yourself in the matter. If he has not, you *must*

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keep the money as a punishment for the uncomplimentary allusion you have made to Field's Horace.
Soit!

Very sincerely,
FRANCIS WILSON

The subsequent publication of the "Echoes," which Wilson finally undertook himself, is a very pretty story of bibliomaniac friendship. It is told in the introduction to the popular edition issued shortly after Field's death in which Wilson does scant justice to himself in the preparation of one of the most exquisite pieces of printing ever issued from an American pressroom and bindery. The enterprise was originally undertaken by Mr. Wilson with the sole intent that he should have No. 1 of his friend's renditions and paraphrases of Horace. But when it was off the press, Mr. Wilson, with unprecedented magnanimity in your true bibliomaniac, sent the cherished copy to Field, who as promptly returned it with a finely worded note, acknowledging his obligation to Mr. Wilson and expressing the hope that he should live forever, provided he (Field) could live one day longer to write his epitaph.

Profiting by my rejected advice, they postponed the publication of the *Echoes* for two years, while Eugene and his brother Roswell worked industriously to bring the quantity of verse up to the quality of its sumptuous presentation. From a literary point of view the result was disappointing—a fact acknowledged in a grudging sort of way by Mr. Wilson, who admits that "except to a certain class of readers it is not at all the most interesting of Field's productions." Literary work produced under forced draft seldom is, although occasionally it sparkles. Field ends his epilogue to the *Echoes* with this fitting apostrophe to his friend, the preceding verse opening with "But sometime we shall meet again":

EUGENE FIELD AND THE PLAYERS

*Or, if we part to meet no more
This side the misty Stygian Sea,
Be sure of this: on yonder shore
Sweet cheer awaiteth such as we.
A Sabine pagan's heaven, O friend,—
The fellowship that knows no end.*

To Mr. Wilson in his *Life of Himself* all true lovers of the real Eugene Field are indebted for unlatching the door for the publication of "Little Willie," the mistakenly sequestered poem which he read to an applauding assemblage of the Chicago Fellowship Club on the evening of October 19, 1895. For thirty years this innocent brother of "Little Boy Blue" and "The Lyttel Boy" has lived a furtive and vagrant existence, denied entrance to the company of its fellows in *Songs of Childhood*, "With Trumpet and Drum," etc., and from that fact giving currency to all sorts of stories of the suppression of "a large body of Fieldian verse that was the exact reverse of pure," as charged by one reviewer of the early biographies. To quote Mr. Wilson, "It is as quaint and as tender as anything which ever came from Field's pen, and when he would recite it, as he often did to a chosen few, it never failed to touch the heart of those who were privileged to hear him." It has never before appeared between the covers of a book regularly published, although thousands of copies have been printed and circulated *sub rosa*.

LITTLE WILLIE

*When Willie was a little boy,
No more than five or six,
Right constantly he did annoy
His mother with his tricks.
Yet not a picayune cared I
For what he did or said,
Unless, as happened frequently,
The rascal wet the bed.*

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*Closely he cuddled up to me,
And put his hands in mine,
Till all at once I seemed to be
Afloat in seas of brine.
Sabean odors clogged the air,
And filled my soul with dread,
Yet I could only grin and bear
When Willie wet the bed.*

*'Tis many times that rascal has
Soaked all the bedclothes through,
Whereat I'd feebly light the gas
And wonder what to do.
Yet there he lay, so peaceful like;
God bless his curly head,
I quite forgave the little tyke
For wetting of the bed.*

*Ah me, those happy days have flown.
My boy's a father, too,
And little Willies of his own
Do what he used to do.
And I! Ah, all that's left for me
Is dreams of pleasure fled!
Our boys aint what they used to be
When Willie wet the bed.*

(My MSS. of "Little Willie" bore an unusually bold signature of the author.)

Among the stage friends with whom Field took never-ending liberties in his "Sharps and Flats" column were Mr. and Mrs. William H. Crane—the "Billy" and "Ella" of many a song and story. His waggish fancy gave birth to their son, promptly christened Stuart Robson Crane after the putative father's partner in "Sharps and Flats" in which they starred. This boy Field endowed with all the wayward tricks he had observed in his own semi-incorrigibles. The Cranes spent their summers at Cohasset on the Sea, and Field lost no time in giving "Billy" a roving commission as Commodore of the Cape Cod fleet. What

The Lyttel Boy.
 x

Sometime there been a lyttel boy
 That wolde not renne and play,
 And helpless like that lyttel tyke
 Ben allways in the way;
 "Go, make ye merrie with the cat,"
 His weary moder cried,
 But with a frowis he catcht her gown
 And honge untill her side.

The boy did love his moder well,
 Which spake him faine, I ween;
 He loved to stand and hold her hand
 And ken her with his een
 His cosset bleated in the croft,
 His toys neglected lay,—
 He wolde not goe but, tarrying oer,
 Ben allways in the way.

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the fleet consisted of may be seen in the drawing shown below. It will be remembered that President Cleveland spent his summer vacations on the other side of Cape Cod, at Buzzard's Bay. This proximity of two of his most useful subjects was especially worthy of Field's daily atten-



COMMODORE CRANE
From a drawing by Eugene Field

tion. Mr. Cleveland was a devoted followed of Izaak Walton, and if Commodore Crane could do little with the rod he could cut bait. And so one day the readers of the *Record* were entertained with the following news item:

Mr. William H. Crane, the actor, is looking unusually robust this autumn. He seems to have recovered entirely from the malady which made life a burden to him for several years. He thought there was something the matter with his liver. Last July he put in a good share of his time blue-fishing with Grover Cleveland. One day they ran out of bait.

"Wonder if they'd bite at liver?" asked Crane.

"They love it," answered Cleveland.

So without further ado Crane out with his pen-knife, amputated his liver, and minced it up for bait. He hasn't had a sick day since.

How Mrs. Crane divided with her husband the playful improvisation of Eugene Field is set forth in these three opening stanzas of an apostrophe to

MRS. BILLY CRANE

*A woman is a blessing, be she large or be she small,
Be she wee as any midget or as any cypress tall;
And though I'm free to say I like all women folks the best,
I think I like the little women better than the rest—*

EUGENE FIELD AND THE PLAYERS

*And of all the little women I'm in love with, I am fain
To sing the praises of the peerless Mrs. Billy Crane.*

*I met this charming lady—never mind how long ago—
In that prehistoric period I was reckoned quite a beau;
You'd never think it of me if you chanced to see me now,
With my shrunken shanks and dreary eyes and deeply furrowed brow;
But I was young and chipper when I joined that brisk campaign
At Utica to storm the heart of Mrs. Billy Crane.*

*We called her Ella in those days, as trim a little minx
As ever fascinated man with coquetries, methinks!
I saw her home from singing-school a million times, I guess,
And purred around her domicile three winters, more or less,
And brought her lozenges and things,—alas! 'twas all in vain—
She was predestined to become a Mrs. Billy Crane.*

Another Billy whose name was constantly taken in vain in Field's column was William Florence, the comedian whose Bardwell Stote in the "Mighty Dollar" was a never-failing attraction in those halcyon days of stage and newspaper friendship. He may be remembered by the more mature readers by his Sir Lucius O'Trigger to Joseph Jefferson's Bob Acres in the revival of "The Rivals" a quarter of a century ago.

Then later came Henry Irving into Field's life and friendship. Their attraction to each other was immediate and lasting. Irving was probably the greatest eccentric tragedian of his age and Field was certainly the most entertaining personality in America. Field fell into mimicry of Irving's individualisms from the start, which Irving insisted should be repeated to his face and which he enjoyed with the genuine frankness of a school boy. There were no less than four mimics in America to whom the peculiarities of Irving's speech, manner and walk afforded an increasing source of study, amusement and imitation—Henry E. Dixey and Nat Goodwin, and Eugene Field and Hermann H. Kohlsaat—two professionals and two amateurs; and in

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the rivalry of impersonations, if their mimicry can be so called, the amateurs did not take second place. Field had the advantage of the others in that he gave his fancy full rein in providing the medium for his imitations. He devised impossible monologues to suit Mr. Irving's jerky walk and elocution. Mr. Kohlsaatz, who was one of the best story-tellers of his day, delighted to tell the tale of how Mr. Irving as Richard III shambled into the wings uttering a succession of inarticulate gutturals that caused Kohlsaatz to ask: "Henry, what on earth are you trying to say?"

"Ah! A-a-h! Hermann," answered Irving, "I! Ah! A-a-h forgot M-e-e lines!"

Kohlsaatz's imitation was perfect, only so skillfully exaggerated as to convulse Sir Henry long after he was knighted.

At the table Irving gesticulated nobly with knife and fork, and the reader can believe that Field lost none of his knightly motions in imitating him. It may be recalled that Field found "little to praise" in Irving's "Hamlet," but congratulated him on "reaping a golden harvest" as a reward for his admirable imitations of the young American comedian, Henry E. Dixey. Dixey's great hit as an Irving mimic was as the itinerant milkman in "Adonis," who repudiated the imputation that he sold bad milk with:

"Nay, Nay, I may sell bad water, but ba-a-d milk, Nah, Na-a-h!"

Goodwin rewarded a recall for his imitation of Irving by thrusting his head between the curtains and ejaculating, in the tragedian's staccato: "Pe-e-k Ah! B-o-o!"

It would be easy to fill these pages with stories of those days when the stage and everything pertaining to it brought an unfailing grist of anecdote, association and experience to be ground into every form of light-hearted paragraphs that daily flowed from Field's pen. But enough has been told to enable the reader to understand certain phases of Eugene Field's life and works.

CHAPTER X

DR. O'RELL, FATHER PROUT, ET AL.

NO person who has not had at least a bowing acquaintance with Francis Mahony's immortal *Reliques of Father Prout* can possibly expect to get beyond the vestibule of Eugene Field's mental and literary characteristics. As related in these pages, his education previous to coming to Chicago was of the most haphazard nature. What he knew about books was practically negligible. He had nibbled at the leaves of learning from Monson to Missouri, but nowhere, at Williams, Knox or Columbia, had he grazed in the fields of knowledge. What he knew of languages other than his own he gathered from glosses, and nowhere along the road from St. Joseph to Chicago did he dip into the rich stores of English literature that were always within his reach. His father left him a library of inviting richness in which the Eugene Field of the twenties might have browsed indefinitely, but he passed it by on the other side and toured Europe where he gathered knickknacks, as they tempted his untrained taste. These he pawned without regret to buy his return ticket to St. Louis and an early marriage, that forced him to work before he had exhausted his capacity to play.

But who that knew Eugene Field would have exchanged him as he was for what he might have been had he won all the honors of scholarship that Williams, Knox or the State University of Missouri could bestow? I make bold to answer, not one. Such as God or heredity fashioned him Field was *sui generis*, and any education that might have turned him into a bookworm or a savant would have robbed the world of more gayety than it lost when David Garrick

died. It is doubtful if Field had much acquaintance with Dr. Johnson, outside of consulting his dictionary; his knowledge of Shakespeare was confined to the spoken dramas; Bacon's philosophy was *terra incognita* to him; for *Paradise Lost* he had no concern, nor did *Paradise Regained* fill him with gladness,—or should it have been sadness? He took to the Elizabethan song writers like a duck to water, for there he was in his element. Burns filled him with pure delight as a kindred spirit, and of Charles Lamb he never tired. But for Lamb's contemporaries—Coleridge, Hazlitt, *et al.*, the masters of English literature at that great period, he had no use and the barest verbal smattering.

With his coming to Chicago, however, chance, that director of destinies, threw across his literary life an association that was to supply the unfurnished cells of his mind the reading that of all others was to be fruitful beyond measure. In the year that Field came to Chicago Dr. Frank W. Reilly, then attached to the State Board of Health, was the Springfield correspondent of the *Chicago Herald*; and in the hegira that took the leading members of its staff across Wells Street to the *Morning News* Dr. Reilly went along and established those close relations with Messrs. Stone and Lawson that lasted until his appointment as Deputy Commissioner of Health in Chicago. Now Dr. Reilly was no ordinary practitioner or health officer. He was old enough to have had experience as a surgeon in the Civil War; he had served in the hospitals of Cincinnati and on the yellow fever commission that visited Memphis in 1867. He was an indefatigable worker for advancement in the science and practice of his profession, whose practice he abandoned for journalism. The State of Illinois owes to him its gradual rescue from a dangerous laxity in the granting of medical licenses. But it was not through his exceptional professional qualities that he was to be of incalculable service to Eugene Field, the *Daily News* and Chi-



DR. FRANK W. REILLY

cago. But back of these qualities Dr. Reilly was a ripe classical scholar and bon vivant, and, more to the point, he was steeped in English literature of the period that bears on its scroll such illustrious names as Wordsworth, Coleridge, Lamb, Leigh Hunt, De Quincey, Hazlitt, Hallam, Jeffrey of the *Edinburgh Review*, Lockhart of *Blackwoods*, John Wilson and Francis Mahony. For the purposes of this narrative, every name in this list could be dropped from the roll of notables in Dr. Reilly's familiar authors, retaining only the last two unfamiliar names, concealing the identity of "Christopher North" and "Father Prout." When Dr. Reilly introduced the *Noctes Ambrosianæ* of the former and the *Reliques* of the latter to Eugene Field, he opened to him the treasures of two minds stored with all the learning of the ages, including the Egyptians.

In his *Love Affairs of a Bibliomaniac* Field pays unstinted homage to these two authors. "John Wilson," he says, "was one of the most interesting figures of a time when learning was at a premium; he was a big man amongst big men, and even in this irreverential time genius uncovers at the mention of his name. His versatility was astounding; with equal facility and felicity he could conduct a literary symposium and a cock fight, a theological discussion and an angling expedition, a historical or a political inquiry and a fisticuffs.

"Nature had provided him with a mighty brain in a powerful body; he had a physique equal to the performance of what suggestion soever his splendid intellectuals made. . . . It was no unusual thing for him to write for thirteen hours at a stretch; when he worked, he worked; and when he played, he played—that is perhaps the reason why he was never a dull boy."

Field never went into such literary ecstasies over Francis Mahony, probably for the reason that "Father Prout" in the flesh did not fill such a large orbit in his time as did the burly editor of *Blackwood's* and contributor of the *Noctes*

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Ambrosianæ to its columns. Briefly, Mahony was born at Cork, bred a Jesuit in Paris, took priest's orders at Rome and became chaplain to a Cork hospital. After a few years he gave up the clerical calling and contributed to *Fraser's Magazine* the papers which were collected and republished as *Reliques of Father Prout* in 1836. He was possessed of the unusual combination of great scholarship and an overflowing fund of humor. His biographer says that "he made brilliant translations into Greek, Latin and French," but neglects to emphasize that he also made still more brilliant translations of these translations back into classic English prose and verse.

It was to these authors, or rather to the great "reliques" of these two authors that Eugene Field owed at least nine-tenths of his knowledge of English literature, his introduction to Béranger and his abiding intimacy with Horace. Moreover it was to Dr. Frank Reilly, the "genial Doc" of our association and the Dr. O'Rell of the *Love Affairs* that he owed his introduction to the *Noctes* and the *Reliques*. Let Field through the *Love Affairs* speak for himself:

I have noticed one peculiarity that distinguishes many admirers of the *Noctes*; they seldom care to read anything else; in the *Noctes* they find a response to the demand of every mood. It is much the same way with lovers of Father Prout. Dr. O'Rell divides his adoration between old Kit North and the Sage of Watergrasshill (Prout). To be bitten of either mania is bad enough; when one is possessed at the same time of a passion both for the *Noctes* and for the *Reliques*, hopeless indeed is his malady! Dr. O'Rell is so deep under the spell of crusty Christopher and the Corkonian père that he not only buys every copy of the *Noctes* and of the *Reliques* he comes across but insists upon giving copies of these books to everybody of his acquaintance. I have even known him to prescribe one or the other of these works to patients of his.

I recall that upon one occasion, having lost an Elzevir at a book auction, I was afflicted with melancholia to such a degree that I had to take to my bed. Upon my physician's arrival he made, as is his custom, a careful inquiry into my condition and into the causes inducing it. Finally, "You are afflicted," said Dr. O'Rell,

"with the megrims, which, fortunately, is at present confined to the Pacehionian depressions of the sinister parietal. I shall administer Father Prout's *Rogueries of Tom Moore* (pronounced More) and Kit North's debate with the Ettrick Shepherd upon the subject of sawmon. No other remedy will prove effective."

The treatment did, in fact, avail me, for within forty-eight hours I was out of bed and out of the house; and, what is better yet, I picked up at a bookstall, for a mere song, a first edition of "Special Providences in New England"!

Dr. Reilly also saved Field the necessity, time and expense of a medical dictionary, for which he would have had constant use in his fondness for interlarding his "Sharps and Flats" with medical terms. It was so much easier to get what he wanted or didn't want from the genial and ever responsive Doc. Between the two there was an unending stream of friendly banter, sometimes on Field's part reduced to verse, like this:

THE BANTERERS

*Said Field to Dr. Reilly, "You
Are like the moon, for you get brighter
When you get full, and it is true
Your heavy woes thereby grow lighter."
"And you," the doctor answer made,
"Are like the moon because you borrow
The capital on which you trade,
As I'm acquainted, to my sorrow!"
"'Tis true I'm like the moon, I know,"
Replied the poor but honest wight,
"For journeying through this vale of woe
I borrow oft, but always light!"*

January, 1887.

From "Wit of the Silurian Age"

It was Field's humor throughout their comradeship to represent Dr. Reilly as an addict to Dick Swiveller's "rosy," and E. D. Cowen as over-susceptible to female charms. It pleased him to picture himself as the good angel sent by a special Providence to rescue the doctor from

The Banterers

Said Faeld to Dr. Reilly "How

Are like the moon for you get brighter

When you get full, and it is true

Your heavy woes thereby ^{grow} get lighter."

"And you", the Doctor answer made,

"Are like the moon because you borrow

The capital on which you trade —

As I'm acquainted, to my sorrow!"

"It's true I'm like the moon, I know,"

Replied the poor but honest night

"~~And I regret to find it so~~" For, journeying through this vale of woe,

I borrow oft, but always light!"

Jan. 1889. — From "Mit of the Silurian Age."

DR. O'RELL, FATHER PROUT, ET AL.

drowning himself in the flowing bowl and to save Cowen from the seductive coils of designing Helens of Troy. How he harped on the contrasting characteristics with which he endowed his friends he put into such verse as this:

WHICH SHALL IT BE

*The Dock he is a genial friend,
He frequently has cash to lend;
He writes for Rauch and on the pay
He sets 'em up three times a day.
Oh, how serenely I would mock
My creditors, if I were Dock.*

*The Cowen is a lusty lad
For whom the women folks go mad;
He has a girl in every block—
Herein, methinks, he beats the Dock.
Yes, if the choice were left to me,
A lusty Cowen I would be.*

*Yet, were I Cowen, where, oh, where
Would be my Julia, plump and fair?
And where would be those children four
Which now I smilingly adore?
The thought induces such a shock
I'd not be Cowen, I'd be Dock.*

*But were I Dock, with stores of gold,
How would I pine at being old—
How grieve to see in Cowen's eyes
That amorous fire which age denies.
Oh, no, I'd not be Dock—forsooth
I'd rather be the lusty youth.*

*Nor Dock nor Cowen would I be,
But such as God hath fashioned me;
For I may now with maidens fair
Assume I'm Cowen debonair,
Or, splurging on a borrow'd stock,
I can imagine I'm the Dock.*

Aug. 3, 1886.

LIFE OF EUGENE FIELD

Lest the reader should get a wrong impression of the real relations existing between Field and Dr. Reilly, it may be well to introduce here another bit of verse whose sentiment more truly reflects his true sentiments. It was written in honor of the doctor's silver wedding:

TO DR. FRANK W. REILLY

II

*If I were rich enough to buy
A case of wine (though I abhor it!)
I'd send a case of extra dry,
And willingly get trusted for it.
But, lack a day! You know that I'm
As poor as Job's historic turkey—
In lieu of Mumm, accept this rhyme,
An honest gift, though somewhat jerky.*

.

IV

*So here's a health to you and wife:
Long may you mock the reaper's warning,
And may the evening of your life
In rising Sons renew the morning;
May happiness and peace and love
Come with each morrow to caress ye;
And when you've done with earth, above—
God bless ye, dear old friend—God bless ye.*

Nor was this the last or only verse in which Field gave full rein to his affection for his friend, mentor, "Mæcenas and physician." About the time that he began to realize the necessity of taking serious counsel with his physician in regard to his rebellious digestion, in February, 1889, he printed the following two stanzas in his "Sharps and Flats" column:

DR. O'RELL, FATHER PROUT, ET AL.

TO F. W. R. AT 6 P. M.

*My friend, Mæcenæ and physician,
Is in so grumpy a condition
I really more than half suspicion
He nears his end.
Who then would be on earth to shave me,
To feed me, coach me, and to save me
From tedious cares that would enslave me—
Without this friend.
Nay, fate forbend such wild disaster!
May I play Pollux to his Castor
Thro' years that bind our hearts the faster
With golden tether;
And every morbid fear releasing,
May our affection bide unceasing—
With every salary raise increasing—
Then die together!*

By this time Dr. Reilly had succeeded to John F. Ballantyne's position as managing editor of the *Morning Record* and their relations were closer than ever, Field finding in "Dr. O'Rell" a less exacting copyreader than he ever found in his brother-in-law.

My scrapbooks carry two amusing drawings by Field, such as he delighted to make at the expense of his two friends. The first carrying the legend, "What is home without a Nomp?" was sent to me while away on my vacation in 1886, accompanied by the following remarks:

"Poor Old Dock! He comes into the room and leaves his key sticking in the door; to complicate matters still further, he leaves another key sticking in the bookcase. When I reproach him with these evidences of a failing mind, he snivels and cries. I wish he were here that I might read these lines to him. Then there is Cowen—but I will not fill this letter with incoherent criminations. The enclosed sketch will explain all. It represents a scene in this office. I have stepped out to post a letter to you. Coming

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back I peep in at the window and behold baby Dock in his high chair weeping lustily, whilst baby Cowen has crept out of his chair, toddled to the wall and is reaching for his *bottle!* (italics Field's). Between the hysterics of one babe and the bottle of the t'other, I am well nigh exhausted. Come back and take care of your babies yourself!"

As this office window was on the third story, the artist must have had tall stilts to get his peep at his two precious babies.

To add to Field's genuine affection for Dr. Reilly there was a gastronomic chord that bound them closer than brothers. Mrs. Reilly was a famous cook, whose "sapid juices" were known throughout the North Side of Chicago and whose fame was state wide. She had been a wonderful helpmate to the doctor and mother to his young brood of three sons and one daughter. She was very capable in the best sense of that word which Field loved, and in every womanly way she appealed to his honor for the sex. Tributes to Mrs. Reilly fairly dance through his "Sharps and Flats" from the earliest date down to the following verses, which appeared in his column as late as May 13, 1893:

MRS. REILLY'S PEACHES

*Whether in Michigan they grew,
Or by the far Pacific,
Or Jerseywards, I never knew
Or cared! they were magnifique!
They set my hungry eyes aflame
My heart to beating quicker,
When trotted out by that good dame
A-drowned in spicy liquor.*

*Of divers sweets in many a land
I have betimes partaken,
Yet now for those old joys I stand
My loyalty unshaken!*

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*My palate, weary of the ways
Of modern times, beseeches
The toothsome grace of halcyon days
And Mrs. Reilly's peaches.*

*Studded with cloves and cinnamon,
And duly spiced and pickled,
That viand was as choice a one
As ever palate tickled!
And by those peaches on his plate
No valorous soul was daunted,
For oh, the more of them you ate
The more of them you wanted.*

*The years have dragged a weary pace
Since last those joys I tasted,
And I have grown so wan of face
And oh, so slender waisted!
Yes, all is sadly changed and yet
If this eulogium reaches
A certain lady, I shall get
A quick return in peaches.*

And he got them just as sure as dear Mrs. Reilly saw the "Want ad" in the *Morning Record*.

As for the other "pard" in this threesome of friendship, song and story, Cowen does not figure as prominently in Field's printed works. But I know, and Dr. Reilly knew, that he was the one to whom the "good knight" turned at every perplexity in his life, in the far West, in Chicago and in Europe, for counsel and if need were, for assistance. And it was to Cowen that Eugene Field dedicated what he regarded as his best imaginative verse, "Marthy's Younkit," the last stanza of which runs:

*The camp is gone; but Red Hoss Mountain rears its kindly head,
And looks down, sort uv tenderly, upon its cherished dead;
'Nd I reckon that, through all the years, that little boy wich died
Sleeps sweetly an' contentedly upon the mountain side;*

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*That the wild flowers uv the summer-time bend down their heads
to hear
The footfall uv a little friend they know not slumbers near;
That the maggies on the sollum rocks strange flutterin' shadders
make,
An' the pines an' hemlocks wonder that the sleeper doesn't wake;
That the mountain brook sings lonesome-like an' loiters on its way
Ex if it waited for a child to jine it in its play.*

If the reader wants to get close to Eugene Field at his best, let him turn to "Marthy's Younkit" in *A Little Book of Western Verse* and read it aloud to a sympathetic listener for its wonderful suiting of the word to the thought, and see if he does not endorse Field's judgment. In Red Hoss Mountain, when Little Younkit died

*. . . though it had been fashionable to swear a perfec' streak,
There warn't no swearin' in the camp for pretty nigh a week!*

In considering the friendships into which Eugene Field was welcomed when he came to the *Morning News*, that were to play a part in his literary development the Peatties, Robert Burns and Elia W., are entitled to a prominent place. They too were a part of the important group recruited from the *Chicago Herald* in 1883 by Melville E. Stone to strengthen the staff of which he was to become so proud. They were very young and had just returned from their honeymoon trip to a neighboring suburb when the transfer of brains across Wells Street took place. Robert, as his middle name might suggest, was "chock full" of the poetry of mountain, lake and heather, and Field "fed fat" on Scotch romance and song from his lips.

It was in the early autumn of 1886, when Robert and Elia visited Denver, that Field seized the opportunity to make that visit as embarrassing as possible. "I have sent a personal," he wrote me at the time, "to each of the Denver papers announcing that Mr. and Mrs. Peattie are there on their bridal tour. I have given Peattie divers let-

ters of introduction to Denver folks: to Dr. Lemen, introducing him as an invalid; to Judge Tall, as a client; to Fred Skiff, as a rich young man anxious to invest in Colorado mines, etc., etc. The dear boy will have a lovely time, methinks."

As Field took the precaution to make the intent of his "methinks" doubly sure, he let each of the addressees of his letters, including the hotel manager, into the plot. The result was that from the time they were shown into the bridal suite at Brown's until they fled from the swarm of land speculators and mining promoters egged on by Fred Skiff, they had the "lovely time" of their young lives.

Field never outgrew the pleasure he found in playing such pranks on his friends, who for their part accepted the situations with the grin-and-bear-it equanimity that is the hallmark of true and abiding friendship. To such friendship we owe innumerable skits in prose and verse, such as those addressed by Field at intervals to the Peatties, Rob and Elia. A specimen of these is

TO MR. PEATTIE'S CAPE

*Oh, pale is Mr. Peattie's face
And lank is Mr. Peattie's shape,
But with a dreamy, sensuous grace,
Beseeming Peattie's swinging pace,
Hangs Mr. Peattie's cape!*

*'Tis wrought of honest woollen stuff
And bound around with cotton tape—
When winter winds are chill and rough
There's one big heart that's warm enough
In Mr. Peattie's cape!*

*If fits him loose about the ribs,
But hugs his neck from throat to nape,
And, spite his envious neighbors' fibs,
A happy fellow is his ribs,
In Mr. Peattie's cape.*

Oh, pale is Mr. Peattie's face

And lank is Mr. Peattie's shape

But, with a dreamy, anxious gaze

Peering Peattie's swinging face,

Hangs Mr. Peattie's cape.

'Tis wrought of honest woolen stuff

And bound about with cotton tape -

When winter winds are chill and rough,

There's one big heart that's warm enough

In Mr. Peattie's cape!

It fits him loose about the ribs,

But hugs his neck from throat to nape,

And, spite his envious neighbors' fibs,

A happy fellow is his ribs

In Mr. Peattie's cape.

TO MR. PEATTIE'S CAPE



So here's defiance to the storm

And here's a pledge in amber grape

To him whose heart is always warm

And who conceals a liesome form

In Mr. Peattie's rafe !

#

TO MR. PEATTIE'S CAPE (CONTINUED)

Drawing by Sclanders.

*So here's defiance to the storm,
And here's a pledge in amber grape
To him whose heart is always warm,
And who conceals a lissome form,
In Mr. Peattie's cape.*

It was some years later (1887) that Field, moved by his ancient and honorable impulse to imitate every form of dialect in classic and slang English, proceeded to welcome home Robert to Elia—the latter whom he loved for Charles Lamb's immortal sake—in the following dialect verse:

THE RETURN OF THE HIGHLANDER

*He touted low and veiled his bonnet
When that he kenned his blushing Elia—
"Gude faith," he cried, "my bonnie bride,
I fashed mesell some wan wod steal ye!"*

*"My bonny loon," the gude wife answered,
"When nane anither wod befriend me,
Gainst muckle woes and muckle foes,
Braw Donald Field did oft farfend me!"*

*"Of all the bonnie heelan' chiels
There's nane sae braw as this gude laddie—
Wi' sike an arm to shield fro' harm—
Wi' sike a heart beneath his plaidie!"*

*"Gin Sandy Knox or Sawney Dennis
Or Dougal Thompson take delight in
A-fashing me wi' t ghoulisn glee,
Braw Donald Field wod do my fightin'."*

*Then Robert Peattie glowed wi' pleasure;
"I wod no do the deed on Sunday,
But Donald Field shall be well mealed
Tomorrow, which I ken is Monday!"*

*Then Robert took his gude wife hame
And spread a feast of Finnan Haddie;
In language soft he praised her oft,
And oft she kissed her bonnie laddie.*

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The "Sandy" Knox of this verse was William Knox, a star reporter and versatile special writer who joined the *News* with others from the *Herald*. He was a great favorite of Field's and was of real assistance to him when Field was a stranger and in ill health in London in 1889-90. "Sawney" Dennis was Charles H. Dennis, a young reporter at that time, who had joined the *Daily News* staff in 1882. From that year until now (1926) Mr. Dennis has occupied pretty nearly every position on the news and editorial end of the *Evening* or *Morning News*—reporter, dramatic critic, editorial writer, city editor, managing editor, and right-hand man of Mr. Lawson. He is the author of a very interesting contribution to the biographies of our friend, under the restrictive title of *Eugene Field's Creative Years*, and attempts the impossible task of putting the irrepressible Gene in corsets with an incipient halo. If Dennis had been free of certain traditions that confuse the *Daily News* and the *Morning News*, he had the ability and the material to produce a Life of Eugene Field that would have made the rewriting of my *Study* unnecessary.

Another associate and friend of Field's truly creative years, his employer, Melville E Stone, deserves a place on this scroll not far below those assigned to Dr. Reilly and Edward Cowen. In a presentation book, which he had probably bought at a secondhand store and rubbed out the price mark, as was his custom, Field inscribed the following certificate of their intimate relations:

To
Melville E. Stone, Esq.
Once my employer,
Always my friend
and invariably my creditor,
I present this book with much love,
Eugene Field

There is another acknowledgment of Mr. Stone's loving

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kindness to his friend who, according to a slip in his *Fifty Years a Journalist*, "never smoked"—this time in rhyme telling:

HOW MR. STONE REWARDED A FAITHFUL VASSAL

*Quoth generous, genial Mr. Stone—
As once he brooded all alone—*

*"It doth enrage me highly
To climb up here and see no sign
Of Thompson or of Ballantyne,
Of Hawkins or of Reilly.*

*"These persons are engaged to write
Their lucubrations, fair and bright,
Upon my paper's pages;
But, by my soul! I ween they shirk
For wine and actresses the work
For which they draw their wages."
Ay, all are fake—save one alone!"
Fiercely continued Mr. Stone—
"And he alone is dutiful!
At all times sober and on deck,
Calmly he issues from this wreck
And whoops his work up beautiful.*

*"And seeing him in yonder room
Mocking the incandescent gloom,
I venerate my joker;
And lo! how eagerly he chews
His humble plug—would he refuse
A mild Havana smoker?"*

Nov. 26, 1885.

If that question had been propounded in the presence of the sheet iron sounding board that hung in "yonder room," it would have emitted a stentorian "Would he!"

For the Christmas issue of the *Morning News* in 1886 Mr. Stone conceived the brilliant idea of having every member of the staff, from Field down to the rawest "cub" reporter, write a Christmas story. The result was, as might

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have been expected, as colossal a disappointment as it deserved to be. Field worked hard over his contribution, which was fully up to his standard. But what was his disgust when it was announced that the stories were to be paid for on a scale of Jeffersonian democratic equality at \$15 apiece. Field was outraged at the thought of being remunerated at the same rate as the boy that carried copy. He accepted the fifteen as an instalment, and proceeded to execute the following graveyard picture and epitaph:



*Here lies a mass of mouldering clay
Who sought in youth a path to glory
But dies of age - without his pay
For writing of a Christmas story.*

#

1886.

Among the friends that had a distinct influence in shaping Eugene Field's literary career was Charles A. Dana, whom he met only occasionally and at long intervals, but whose journalistic instincts and methods were constantly present in his thoughts and works. It was from Mr. Dana's practice in the *New York Sun* that he borrowed the trick of filling out the initials of well-known public characters with full names, real or fictitious, as suited the impression he sought to make. He even employed the Dana formula against Mr. Dana himself in a sportive substitution of Augustus for the baptismal Anderson in his middle name. As told in Edward P. Mitchell's *Memoirs of an Editor*, their friendship began in 1882 when Mr. Dana visited Denver and Field was working on the *Tribune*

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there. Field brought that friendship to Chicago and retained it as long as he lived. Perhaps the picture by Sclanders, the cartoonist of the *News*, of "The Man Who Worked with Dana" surrounded by its editorial staff—Dr. Reilly, Knox, Ballantyne and Dennis, with Field booted and spurred in the foreground—gives the best idea of the attention paid any one bearing credentials from Mr. Dana in the *News* office. In this picture, reproduced from Mr. Mitchell's *Memoirs*, the portrait of Field might have been drawn by himself—it follows his own sketches or caricatures so closely. Note the favorite mole on his left cheek.



THE MAN WHO WORKED WITH DANA

The concluding stanza of Field's verses widely known as "The Man Who Worked with Dana on the New York *Sun*," bears almost reverential testimony to the light in which Field held its subject:

*But bless ye, Mr. Dana! May you live a thousan' years,
To sort o' keep things lively in this vale of human tears;*

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*An' may I live a thousan', too,—a thousan' less a day,
For I shouldn't like to be on earth to hear you'd passed away.
And when it comes your time to go you'll need no Latin chaff
Nor biographic data put in your epitaph;
But one straight line of English and of truth will let folks know
The homage 'nd the gratitude 'nd reverence they owe;
You'll need no epitaph but this: "Here sleeps the man who run
That best 'nd brightest paper, the Noo York Sun."*

Mr. Mitchell, who succeeded Mr. Dana as editor-in-chief of the *Sun*, following it to the evening, never setting, *Sun* under the late Frank Munsey, was himself a stanch admirer and correspondent of Field.

Among his friends in Chicago no two afforded him more amusement than James W. Scott, the editor of the *Herald*, and Hermann H. Kohlsaas, then the editor of the *Inter Ocean*, at that time carrying on a bitter partisan fight in their newspapers. This was seized upon by Field for the following verse:

INTER OCEAN AND HERALD

*Smiling Herm and Genial Jim—
One is fat and t'other slim;
Both are what the world would term
A very sleek, persuasive kind.
Nowhere smoother goods you'll find
Than Genial Jim and Smiling Herm!*

*Smiling Herm delights to say
In his paper every day
Brutal things of Genial Jim;
Then, like any trodden worm,
Genial Jim squares off at Herm
And he sasses back at him.*

*Some misguided folks suppose
They will shortly come to blows,
Oh, how dreadful that would be!
That intriguing, cunning pair
With their hollow noise may scare
Other folks, but never me!*

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*For I've noticed, though they fight
All day long, they frisk at night.
Yes, I've seen 'em at the Fair;
Through the Plaisance like two boys
They go mousing for the joys
Which, I'm told, are plenty there.*

*So, whenever Smiling Herm
Hurls at Jim some withering term,
Or when Jim hurls back at him,
I'm not worried by the same.
No, I've tumbled to your game,
Smiling Herm and Genial Jim.*

When Mr. Kohlsaas, whose *From McKinley to Harding* (Scribners, 1922) with pleasant naïveté records his intimate association with half a dozen of our presidents, having sold the control of the *Inter Ocean*, returned from a trip to Europe, Field welcomed him thus:

"Mr. H. H. Kohlsaas is with us once again. In six months he has traveled 28,000 miles, purchased six newspapers and organized one McKinley Club."

Which is a fair summary of the boundless energy and irrepressible ambition of our friend "H. H. K.," as he signed himself. One of those newspapers was the *Times-Herald*—purchased from the widow of the "Genial Jim" of the foregoing verses—which in 1896 led the fight for the gold plank at the St. Louis Republican convention that landed William McKinley in the White House.

The comradeship between Field and James Whitcomb Riley was an almost national affair, and the riggs they played on each other knew no end. Field used to tell one story on Riley with great gusto. As told in "Sharps and Flats," it ran:

James Whitcomb Riley, the Hoosier poet, went to Europe last summer. On the return voyage an incident happened which is well worth telling of. To beguile the tediousness of the voyage it was proposed to give a concert in the salon of the ship—an entertain-

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ment to which all capable of amusing their fellow-passengers should contribute. Mr. Riley was asked to recite some of his original poems, and of course he cheerfully agreed to do so. Among the number present at this mid-ocean entertainment, over which the Rev. Myron Reed presided, were two Scotchmen, very worthy gentlemen, *en route* from the land o' cakes to the land of biscuits, upon a tour of investigation. These twain shared the enthusiasm with which the auditors applauded Mr. Riley's charming recitations. They marvelled that so versatile a genius could have lived in a land reputed for uncouthness and savagery.

"Is it no wonderfu', Donal," remarked one of these Scots, "that a tradesman suld be sic a bonnie poet?"

"And is he indeed a tradesman?" asked the other.

"Indeed he is," answered the other. "Did ye no hear the dominie intryjuce him as the hoosier poet? Just think of it, mon!—just think of sic a gude poet dividing his time at making hoosiery!"

And so I could go on along the line of well-known public men, authors, editors and artists, into whose lives Field brought sunshine, fine fellowship and good cheer in "this vale of human tears" and from whom he absorbed compensation in a wider education and vision for the tasks of the day than could be learned from books. But one of these, Dr. Reilly, did more than all the rest to inspire Field with the love for English classics that was to carry him far and put him on familiar terms with Horace and Béranger through Father Prout's *Reliques*.

CHAPTER XI

INTRODUCTION TO COLORED INKS AND SHARPS AND FLATS

FOR twelve years after Eugene Field came to Chicago he and I were very close friends, and during the first five years of that time we were inseparable in our working days and joyous nights. In the *News* office each was known as the other's "Habit," to which an occasional adjective was prefixed by envious or admiring observers of the pleasure we got out of each other's society. Circumstances that rule us all after birth and early environment have prepared the courts, could not have thrown two more unlike parties into such close and lasting comradeship. In the preceding pages the reader has had a chance to realize what an eccentric picturesque and original character Field was—full of queer notions and odd fancies, a student of fairy tales and a mimic and raconteur of amazing versatility, the most distinguished athletic fan of his day, abhorring athletics and despising all kinds of physical exercise. So far as a man can judge of himself, I was pretty nearly the reverse of all of Field's peculiarities. From my youth up I had engaged in every athletic sport known to boy or man—cricket, baseball, skating, curling, canoeing, rowing, shooting, snowshoeing, field sports and every form of exercise to increase physical fitness. After four years in a lawyer's office I passed the examinations for the bar, and while waiting for clients took three-years-courses-in-one at the University of New Brunswick. But my reputation in sports overshadowed my professional prospects, and really drove me to emigration to San Francisco in hopes of start-

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ing fresh. But it was no use. As soon as I could afford it, I joined the Olympic Club there and gave up the law for journalism, in which my legs carried me as far as my promiscuous reading. From dramatic criticism to playwriting was an easy step in California in the days when David Belasco got his start. Joining forces with Clay M. Greene, we had such success that we moved to New York, where I had to resume newspaper work on the *Tribune* to avoid becoming a charge on Trinity or some other metropolitan parish. By 1879 I had graduated to the *Times* and was preparing for a jump to Mr. Dana's New York *Sun* when the Western Agency of the New York Associated Press, located then at Cincinnati, was accepted and I came west. In March, 1880, I moved the Associated Press Agency to Chicago, where I was shortly to be associated with James W. Scott, William D. Eaton, John F. Ballantyne and David Henderson in starting the Chicago *Herald*, which after many mutations is now the front title of Mr. Hearst's *Herald-Examiner*.

It was the migration of the *Herald* editorial staff to Mr. Stone's *Morning News* that threw Field and me together on the third floor front of the *Daily News* building. I have given the above personal sketch so that the reader may understand that we were not brought together by natural selection but through that strange operation of the law that delights in joining contrasts. For five years we sailed along without an interruption until my marriage in 1887, when the chain was lengthened to take in Mrs. Thompson but was never broken nor weakened.

Everyone familiar with any of Eugene Field's manuscripts must have been impressed with the exquisite neatness and wonderful legibility of his handwriting. It was so small that it was only legible through the perfection of its composition. He deliberately adopted this style of diminutive chirography in order to save time, if not paper, for obviously his pen could compass more words written

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thus ~~field~~ than thus FIELD. Before Field came to Chicago he had occasionally singled out words and even sentences by writing them in the red ink to be found on any accountant's desk—especially in a newspaper balance sheet. But it was not until the winter of 1885 that he began to decorate everything he wrote with all the colors of the rainbow and some unknown to that "autograph of God." It came about in this way.

Walter Cranston Larned, the author of *Churches and Castles of Mediæval France*, was then the art critic of the *Morning News*, to which he contributed a series of papers on the well-known Walters Gallery in Baltimore. They were twelve in number, and one day Field, Ballantyne and I, discussing the general value of art criticism, were led to question whether Mr. Larned's articles conveyed an intelligible impression to the reader. Thereupon we set out, in a spirit of frolic, to see whether we could reproduce from Mr. Larned's descriptions any recognizable approach to the originals in Mr. Walters' gallery. I was living at the Sherman House in those days, and we converted my room into an amateur studio. Thither we brought as complete an outfit of watercolors as could be bought in Abbott's Art Store and there for several weeks we spent an hour or so daily producing the most remarkable counterfeits of the paintings described by Mr. Larned. None of us knew anything of the most rudimentary use of watercolors. But somehow Field could not manage them at all. He could and would make the most whimsical drawing, only to obliterate every semblance to his conception in the coloring. To prevent his leaving us in the lurch I suggested that he might do better with colored inks to match the descriptions. He fell in with the idea. I ransacked Chicago for colored inks and Field resumed his work with increased enthusiasm. He produced two masterpieces, which Three Fingered Hoover would have acknowledged as "cheef doovers." The first was a restoration of Corot's "Saint Sebastian."

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To give an idea of what Field attempted to depict, the following extract from Mr. Larned will suffice:

It is a forest scene. Great trees rise on the right to the top of the canvas. On the left are also some smaller trees whose upper branches reach across and make with the trees on the right a sort of arch through which is seen a wonderful stretch of sky—very blue where it is clear, but with many grey wind-swept clouds. The distance, light, atmosphere and color in this sky are rendered with marvelous skill and truth. Just at this point the figures of two retreating horsemen are seen. . . . In the immediate foreground lies the figure of the half dead saint, whose wounds are being dressed by two women. Hovering immediately above this group, far up among the tree branches, two lovely little angels are seen holding the palm and crown of the martyr. All the figures are better painted than is usual with Corot, and the angels are very light and delicate, both in color and form.

Thus Mr. Larned, who quoted a French authority as saying that it was "the most sincerely religious picture of the nineteenth century." To Field's mind it suggested only the grotesque. He followed the general outline of the scene as described above, but made the landscape subordinate to the figures. The retreating ruffians bore an unmistakable resemblance to outlawed American cowboys. The saint showed carmine ink traces of having been brutally assaulted. But the chief interest in the picture was divided between a lunchbasket in the foreground, from which protruded a bottle of "St. Jacob's Oil" and a brace of vividly pink cupids hopping about in the tree tops, rejoicing over the effects of the saintly patent medicine. His treatment of the picture, following the general line of the original, proved, or at least indicated, that Corot had approached the line where the religious sublime suggests the ridiculous.

Field's other contribution to our gallery, which appealed to his untrammelled sense of the absurd, was Fortuny's "Don Quixote." This picture, a water color, in the

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Walters gallery, according to Mr. Larned's description, is:

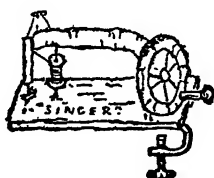
A picture which represents the immortal knight in the somewhat undignified occupation of hunting for fleas in his clothing. He has thrown off his doublet, and his undergarment is rolled down to his waist, leaving the upper portion of his body nude, excepting for the immense helmet which hides his bent-down head. Both hands grasp the undergarment, and the eyes are evidently turned in eager expectancy upon the folds which the hands are clasping in the hope that the roving tormentor has at last been captured. What an astonishing freak of genius! For genius it certainly is. The color and drawing of the figure are simply masterly and the entire tone of the picture is wonderfully rich! Indeed for a water color it is quite marvelous. This is one of Fortuny's celebrated pictures, but how the *Ecole des Beaux Arts* would, in the old days, have held up its hands and closed its eyes in holy horror! Possibly an earnest disciple of Lessing even might have a rather dubious feeling about such a choice of subjects. Nevertheless, it is a wonderful picture, and it has become the fashion to allow almost any liberty to Fortuny's untamed and exuberant genius.

Can the reader imagine a subject better fitted for Eugene Field's "untamed and exuberant genius" than Mr. Larned's description presents? And right merrily did he attack it with his fine-pointed steel pen and his battery of colored inks. Where Fortuny faltered on the edge of the grotesque, Field plunged boldly in with a recklessness of consequences that emulated that of the Don in tilting with windmills. Field's knight of the sorrowful countenance was clad in modern costume from elastic-sided riding boots and monster spurs up to the belt. From that point his emaciated body was nude save for half a dozen sporadic hairs. In place of Mambrino's apocryphal helmet, Field decorated the Don's head with an enormous garden watering-pot, on the rampant spout of which, poised on one foot and dominating the whole canvas, as artists say, was the pestiferous *pulex irritans*.

Among the studies of those artist days which have been preserved was a little thing in black and white by Field

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supposed to be a reproduction of Frere's "The Little Dress-Maker," which Mr. Larned described as "full of character." That there may be no doubt of his handicraft in this masterpiece, Field added the title in his own beautiful writing to the signature of Frere, who never painted a little dressmaker so true to her stitches as this one.



Frere.

The Little Dress-maker.

Nothing short of a formal dinner at the Sherman House would serve for presenting the results of our artistic industry to Mr. Larned, the presentation address being made by James S. Norton, at that time the best-known after-dinner speaker in Chicago. Mr. Henry Field, a junior member of the great dry goods house of Marshall Field & Company, himself the possessor of a choice selection of paintings now in the Chicago Art Institute, recognized every one of our amazing productions from their resemblance to the originals in the Walters gallery, with which he was familiar.

That dinner was further made memorable by Field's recitation of his remarkable poem in mock German entitled "Der Niebelungen und der Schlabbergasterfeldt." Subsequently it was copied in the *Illinois Staats Zeitung* and went the rounds of the German press in all the dignity of German text, accompanied by a variety of serious criticism that kept Field in a merry mood for months. The following version is from the original version in my scrapbook.

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DER NIEBELRUNGEN UND DER SCHLABBERGASTERFELDT

(Narratively)

*Ein Niebelungen schlossen gold
Gehabt gehalten Richter weiss
Ein Schlabbergasterfeldt un sold
Gehaben Meister trenlich heiss
"Ich dich! Ich dich! die Maedchein tzuwei
"Ich dich!" das Niebelungen drei.*

(Tragically)

*Die Turnverein ist lieb und dicht
Zum fest und liebchen Kleiner Geld
Der Niebelungen picht ein Bricht—
Und hit das Schlabbergasterfeldt!
"Ich dich! Ich dich!" die Maedchein schreit
Und so das Schabbergaster deit!*

(Plaintively)

*Ach! weh das Niebelungen spott
Ach! weh das Maedchein Turnverein
Und unser Meister lieben Gott—
Ach! weh das Weinerwurst und Wein!
Ach! weh das Bricht zum Kleiner Geld—
Ach! weh das Schlabbergasterfeldt!*

As an aftermath of this Walters gallery episode, it became my duty, so Field insisted, to keep him supplied not only with inks of all the spectrum colors but with lake white, gold, silver and bronze, with which he was wont to embellish some verse, paragraph, line or word in anything he happened to be writing. Sometimes it was only the tail of a *g*, *y* or *z* that called for "illumination," and then I would be appealed to in some such verse as this:

*"Who spilt my bottle of ink?" said Field.
"Who spilt my bottle of ink?"
And then with a sigh, said Thompson, "'Twas I—
I broke that bottle of ink,
I think,
And wasted the beautiful ink."*

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"Who'll buy a bottle of ink?" asked Field.

"Who'll buy a bottle of ink?"

With a still deeper sigh his friend replied, "I—

I'll buy a bottle of ink

With chink,

I'll buy a bottle of ink!"

"Oh, isn't this beautiful ink!" cried Field.

"Beautiful, bilious ink!"

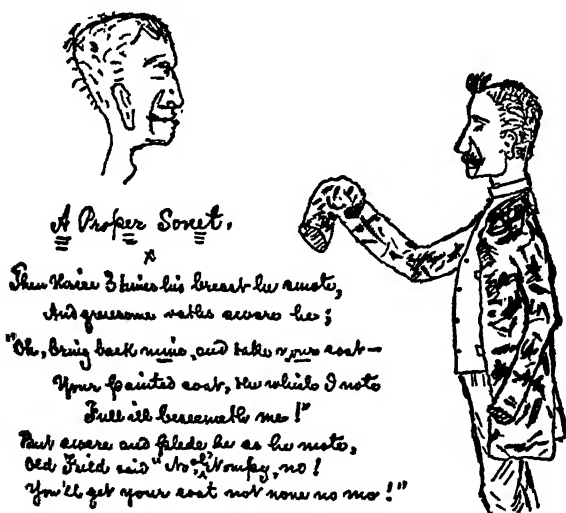
He shook the hand of his old friend, and

He tipped him a pleasant wink

And a blink,

As he went to using that ink.

Upon the composition of this characteristic verse Field wasted over an hour. The body of the text was written



in three shades of green ink and the initials of each stanza were enlarged in red rococo of Field's own invention. Fortunately Field did not insist on a fresh pen with every change in his color scheme or I would have had to apply to Mr. Stone for a raise of salary more frequently, as Field constantly urged me to do. Instead of a new pen at each

COLORED INKS, SHARPS AND FLATS

change, he used his linen office coat for a penwiper, which, as it never went to the wash, soon presented a fair counterfeit of Joseph's garment of many colors. One day Field appropriated my office coat, fresh from the laundry, and left his variegated penwiper to which was pinned the "Proper Sonet" and portrait gallery as depicted above.

"No mo' " it was. The full quiver of other colors with which he was now armed never weakened his loyalty to *red*. His taste for red was fixed and immutable, as the reader might surmise from such lines in its honor in the poem that fairly flaunts the single syllable *red* in its title, whose second stanza reads:

*There's that in red that warmeth the blood,
And quickeneth a man within,
And bringeth to speedy and perfect bud
The germs of original sin;
So, though I'm properly born and bred
I'll own with a certain zest,
That any color so long as it's red
Is the color that suits me best.*

To Field there were many shades of red, all of which suited him best, but especially the red that kept getting redder and redder the farther you go west. Red was one of the reasons why year after year he turned down the tempting offers of Mr. Dana of the *New York Sun*, for he was free to say that he couldn't abide "the tastes that obtain down East"—

*And we're mighty proud to have it said
That here in the versatile West
Most any color, so long as it's red,
Is the color that suits us best.*

And we in the *Morning News* office had to concede the point or find ourselves engulfed in a sea of carmine rhetoric that would have turned the fishwives of Billingsgate green with envy.

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Having anchored himself in the "Red, Red West," Field proceeded to make his presence in the "Sharps and Flats" column known far beyond the corporate limits of Chicago or Cook County or Illinois. From the beginning he gave a local flavor, which quickly became a Eugene Field flavor, to every paragraph or bit of verse he wrote and through it all there ran a spirit of revolt against that condescension which the chosen literati of the East affected toward the benighted denizens of the prairies west of Yonkers and back of the Back Bay. More than a generation has passed since Field first began to lampoon the pretensions of Eastern editors and critics to speak the last word for Uncle Sam. When Field interlarded his early "Sharps and Flats" with a paragraph like this:

Since it appears that Matthew Arnold is neither the man who betrayed his country nor the man who wrote the *Light of Asia*, it is surmised he can't amount to very much, unless, perchance, he should happen to be the author of Arnold's writing ink.

a goodly part of the eastern pack burst into shrill guffaws over the Western writer who didn't know Matthew Arnold.

What is known in Chicago history as the James Russell Lowell episode—where our gifted poet was billed to deliver a patriotic address on Washington's Birthday and disappointed a packed audience in Central Music Hall drawling through a soporific school boy lecture on Shakespeare's "Richard III"—afforded Field rare pickings. And when Julian Hawthorne published an interview with Mr. Lowell abounding in personal gossip of the Court of St. James, from which he had recently returned, there was no end to the fun Field had with Lowell and old "Nat Hawthorne's son, goldarn him." Field even drew upon the vernacular of the Bigelow Papers to wing his arrows, in this wise, from "The Official Explanation," verse III, Lowell supposed to be speaking:

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*"I kin remember that I spun
A hifalutin story
Abeout the Prince of Wales, an' one
Abeout old Queen Victory.
But sakes alive! I never dreamed
The cuss would get it printed—
By that old gal I'm much esteemed,
Ez she hez often hinted."*

Field ended the "Explanation" with Lowell's resolve:

*An' by the way, it's my design
To give up drinkin' cider.*

Shortly after Field's death there sprang up in Chicago a cult that affected to deplore that he had wasted his time and undoubtedly great talents in daily journalism and especially in the paragraphic medley of his "Sharps and Flats." The good people who thought thus and were not slow to voice their opinions in the literary clubs and lyceums of the republic lost sight of the American taste for paragraphic wit. They even forgot how the "Happy Thoughts" of Burnand, the wit of Thackeray, the burlesque of Tom Taylor, and the oddities of Thomas Hood contributed much needed gayety through the columns of *Punch* to the weighty English literature of their time. Hood especially of these four weekly wits of England's great comic paper was in some ways a prototype of Eugene Field's literary product. To-day he is chiefly remembered by his "Song of a Shirt," "Eugene Aram," "The Bridge of Sighs" and "I remember, I remember," but his humorous poems were the "three grains of corn" that, like Field's "Sharps and Flats," kept the literary life within him throughout his long and checkered career.

To this day, if anyone wants to meet Eugene Field as he walked this earth from 1883 to 1895, he must get and read in daily portions the two volumes of *Sharps and Flats*

#

Portland, June, 1885.

x

From hill and plain to the state of Maine
The veterans tailed along,
And they rent the air with the tuneful blare
Of trumpets and of song;
That their throats were dry there will none deny
But little they heeded, I ween,
As they gathered around on the old camp ground
To drink from the same canteen.

— nonp. blue

The tales of old were again retold
And they sang up the war once more —
Till the wood resounded like a thunder sound,
"Let us drink to the boys of yore!"
A rapturous glee that was fair to see
Enveloped the martial scene —
But there came a change that was fateful strange,
When they drank from the same canteen.

— nonp. blue

The veterans through rings now no song
That is keyed in the grand old strain,
But the air is blue with the hullo-balloo
Of the soldiers who marched to Maine;
Not even beer is the proffered cheer —
Not a jug nor a flask is seen,
But it's lemonade of a watery grade
That they drink from the same canteen!

#

PORTLAND, JUNE, 1885

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published by Scribner's Sons in 1900. In these he will not find the high lights of Field's daily grist, for they had been assiduously garnered by Field himself and his executors to make successive overlapping editions of his works. But the gleanings from the residue of his twelve years' work in "Sharps and Flats" more nearly represents the average workings of mind and pen. And be it remembered that upon every lightest syllable in that column he employed the best technique in composition and phrase-making of which he was at the moment capable. Moreover, not a day went by that he did not add to his vocabulary, which he was continually trying on Mr. Ballantyne, who acted as Mr. Stone's watchdog against Field's kicking over the traces. One day the proof of Field's column came to the desk of the managing editor headed by these lines:

*By my troth, I'll now begin ter
Cut a literary caper
On this pretty tab of paper
For the horny-handed printer;
I expect to hear him swearing
That these inks are very wearing
On his ocular squinter.*

In the language of the composing room, this was a "fat take" and was promptly "set up" to be measured and paid for in the printer's string and marked "Kill" by Mr. Ballantyne's blue pencil. How Field was a trial to the flesh of any one responsible for passing on his work is illustrated in a story told by Charles H. Dennis, who in 1891 succeeded Dr. Reilly, Mr. Ballantyne's successor. It fell to his lot to exercise "proper discrimination while choosing between the admissible and the inadmissible products of Field's untrammelled imagination that were submitted daily by him for publication in "Sharps and Flats." To draw

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the line between a flagrant untruth that was both amusing and harmless and a prevarication that might prove painful or injurious to the unoffending victim sometimes proved decidedly difficult. . . . I recall one rather extended article of Field's that dealt fantastically with a religious topic. I held it out (and apparently submitted it to Mr. Lawson) and it came back to me from my superior bearing the pencilled comment: 'This is literally a holy terror.' "

The pity of it is that Dennis did not preserve the offending article so that future generations might judge for themselves the literal dimensions of the much talked about "Holy Terror." It might also explain the difference in the quality of Field's output under the censorship of Mr. Stone as editor and Mr. Lawson as publisher, each a past master in his line and generation.

Quotation is perhaps the fairest method of illustrating the scope and flavor of this notable column, only premising that it was written in and for a generation that has passed on. Ben Butler was a candidate before the National Democratic Convention in 1884. His fate was recorded by Field, on July 11, in this parody of Whittier's well-known lines:

THE POLITICAL MAUD

*Ben Butler, on a summer's day,
Stood in a convention making hay;
The hay was sweet and the hay was dry,
But it wasn't as cocked as old Ben's eye;
For old Ben saw on a gelding gay
Judge Nomination ride that way.*

*When the judge saw Ben in the hay at work,
He stopped his horse with a sudden jerk,
And he rolled his eyes on the winsome face
And the buxom form and the air of grace
And the wealth of cheek and the mesh of hair
Of sweet Ben Butler a-working there.*

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*"Oh," sighed the judge, "that the fate were mine
To wed with a creature so divine!
With Ben for a mate, my life would seem
Like a poet's song or an artist's dream;
But, when they heard of my marital pick,
How like a steer some folks would kick!"*

*So, fearful of what his folks might say,
Judge Nomination rode away,
And left Ben Butler standing there
With his wealth of cheek and his mesh of hair;
And of all sad words of tongue and pen
The saddest are these: "He wouldn't have Ben."*

Fifty years ago, as I write this, the English-speaking world was shocked, stunned and puzzled by the cabled announcement that the Ahkoond of Swat was dead. Terrific in its sudden unexpectedness, "brief as the lightning in the collied night," the cable told its dread message and left a gasping, gaping world in total Cimmerian darkness as to who, where or what was the Ahkoond of Swat. Two journalists, separated by the Atlantic Ocean, rose immediately to the duty of expressing the world's amazement and sorrow over the crushing announcement: Edward Lear of England and George T. Lanigan of the *New York World*. Seizing his pen, Lanigan, with divine afflatus, wrote:

*What, what, what,
What's the news from Swat?
Sad news,
Bad news,
Cometh by the cable led
Through the Indian ocean's bed
Through the Persian Gulf, the Red
Sea and the Med-
iterraneum—he's dead,
The Ahkoond is dead.*

.

LIFE OF EUGENE FIELD

*Dead, dead, dead,
(Sorrow Swats)
Swats wha hae wi Ahkoond bled
Swats wham he hath often led
Onward to a gory bed
Or to victory,
As the case might be.
Sorrow Swats
Shed tears like water,
Your great Ahkoond is dead.
That's Swats the matter.
Fallen at length
Its tower of strength
Its sun is dimmed ere it had nooned
Dead lies the great Ahkoond
The great Ahkoond of Swat
Is not.*

So much for America's sobbing response to the bereavement of the Brotherhood of Swat. Across the broad Atlantic, Edward Lear was expressing the bewilderment of the British Empire in these historic lines:

*Who, or why, or which, or what
Is the Akond of Swat?
Is he tall, or short, or dark or fair?
Does he sit on a stool, or sofa, or chair.
Or squat—
The Akond of Swat?

Does he drink small beer from a silver jug?
Or a bowl? or a glass? or a cup? or a mug?
Or a pot—
The Akond of Swat?

Some one, or nobody, knows, I wot,
Who or which or why or what
Is the Akond of Swat?*

Some eight years after this outburst of ignorance and sorrow over the death of the now immortal Ahkoond of

COLORED INKS, SHARPS AND FLATS

Swat, Field revived interest in the who, which or what of the remote border principality of India. Adopting the American spelling, he wrote:

THE AHKOOND OF SWAT

*When the writer has written with all of his might
Of Blaine and of Cleveland a column or more
And the editor happens along in the night
(As he generally does betwixt midnight and four)
And kills all the stuff that that writer has writ,
And calls for more copy at once on the spot—
There is none for the writer to turn on and hit
But that distant old party, the Ahkoond of Swat.*

*Now the Ahkoond of Swat is a vague sort of man
Who lives in a country far over the sea;
Pray tell me, good reader, if tell me you can,
What's the Ahkoond of Swat to you folks or to me!
Yet when one must be careful, conservative too,
Since the canvass is getting unpleasantly hot,
If we must abuse some, let us haste to imbrue
With that foreign old bloomer, the Ahkoond of Swat!*

*Yet why should we poke this insipid old king,
Who lives in the land of the tiger and cane,
Since the talk we might make on the dotard can't bring
The sweet satisfaction of a Cleveland or Blaine?
A plague on these politics, statesmen and all,
Who conspire to embarrass the editor's lot;
And a plague on the man, we implore, who will call
On a fellow to write of the Ahkoond of Swat!*

*But vain is this fuming, this frenzy, this storm—
The printers care naught for this protest or that;
A long dreadful hollow appears in the "form"—
And it's copy they want, with a preference for "fat."
So here's to our friend who's so handy in need,
Whose useful acquaintance too soon is forgot—
That distant old party and senile old seed,
The loathsome and pestilent Ahkoond of Swat.*

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Which the reader will admit is rather a scurvy and ungrateful return for the good turn the mysterious old dotard of the Indian hill province on occasional need did the writer. These lines also afford the reader an insight into the trials of an editor under orders to put on the soft pedal or change the tune in the midst of a hot campaign.

No account of Eugene Field's miscellaneous collection of souvenirs is complete without mentioning his Gladstone's axe and Mr. Dana's shears, and yet only through a stray paragraph or two in "Sharps and Flats" can the reader learn anything about them. In his column of August 28, 1895, I find the following three items referring to his acquisition of Gladstone's axe.

I

CAMBRIDGE, January 20, 1890

MY DEAR SIR: I send you a copy of the Latin epigram on the axe given to you by Mr. Gladstone, and also what I fear is a rather lame translation of the epigram.

Yours sincerely,
OSCAR BROWNING

*Oceanum transit maribus bene trita securis
Indicium belli nuntia pacis erit
Eruat obscura victrix nemora invia vince.
Instaureturque nova foedus amicitia.*

*The woodman's axe, well worn by Gladstone's hands
Symbol of war, speaks peace to distant lands.
It goes the bush of dark mistrust to clear
And found a league of love for many a year.*

II

LONDON, January 19, 1890.

DEAR SIR: "To America it will go—the axe well worn with handling. The symbol of war will be a message of peace. May it fell the tangled thickets of dark dispute and renew a fresh league of friendship." That is a rough translation. If

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your countrymen admire Mr. Gladstone I wish they had owned him; but the just anger of God sent him to punish our imperial hypocrisy and humbug. Every nation has the Gladstone it deserves. Them's my sentiments.

Alas! I see it is verse you want. Well, here goes:

*This axe will go forth that is worn with his hands
To the West as a message of peace;
May the symbol of war stay the feud of the lands
Bring the light and make bickerings cease.*

*To America passes the axe that is worn
By the hands of the good and the great.
By the symbol of war may the forest be torn—
The forest whose trees are of darkness and scorn;
May its message be friendship, not hate.*

As to visiting the States, I expect to lay my bones there as a literary hack.

Yours very sincerely,
A. LANG.

III

*Where virtues wax
Shall go this axe
A sign of pax
And not of bellum.
Should storms arise
As temper flies
Why Gladstone-wise
'Twill quickly fell 'em.*

—E. F.

On this side of the Atlantic, as Field intimates, the axe is not a symbol of war, but shares with the plow the honor of being the means whereby the wilderness is converted to the uses of civilization.

In this day, when no town can aspire to be a city without

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a school of journalism, it is refreshing to find a paragraph like this in "Sharps and Flats" for January 30, 1891:

"The editor of the St. Louis *Globe-Democrat* is one of the few great journalists we have. Therefore it is of interest and value to secure from him such expressions as this: 'The best editor is the man who can best discriminate between bread and stones before casting upon the waters; the man who can best select from the events of the day the matter to serve up to the reading public for the morrow.'"

"Taylor, the so-called 'Water Poet,' held the same opinion as our distinguished friend McCullagh, only Taylor put the cart before the horse in this wise:

*All ye that fain would print ye newes
Seek not to know whatso to chuse;
But learn whatso to caste awaye,
And print ye reste without delaye."*

Those days are gone forever, the present rule being to print all the news and let the reader "chuse" between the "bread and stones." The two volumes of *Sharps and Flats* were but the cullings from the output of Field's most fruitful years, from which *Culture's Garland* and a dozen books of verse and "Profitable Tales" had already been extracted. Even in the residue still outside of covers may be found a few paragraphs and bits of verse that ring as truly what their maker thought and wrought as can be found inside those dozen books. It is a matter of taste, and it is well for the critic to remember the parable of the rejected stone.

Three specimens from these rejected "Sharps" or "Flats" must suffice to indicate the hidden treasure that lies buried there. The first may be called international in its reactions:

We do not see that Prince Alexander, the deposed Bulgarian monarch, is going to have very much difficulty in keeping the wolf from the door. In addition to the income from a \$2,000,000 legacy,

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he has a number of profitable investments in America which he can realize upon at any time. He owns considerable real estate in Chicago, Kansas City, Denver and Omaha, and he is a part owner of one of the largest sheep ranches in New Mexico. His American property is held in the name of Alexander Marie Wilhelm Ludwig Maraschkoff, and his interests in this country are looked after by Col. J. S. Norton, the well-known attorney of this city. Colonel Norton tells us that he would not be surprised if Prince Alexander were to come to the United States to live. In a letter to Mr. Norton last June the prince said:

"If ever it is the divine pleasure to release us from the harassing responsibilities which now rest upon us, it will be our choice to find a home in that great country beyond the Atlantic, where, removed from the intrigues of court and state, we may enjoy that quiet employment and peaceful meditation for which we have always yearned."

There was not a word of truth in the whole of this paragraph except that saying Mr. Norton was a well-known attorney in Chicago, upon whom Field, after his wont, had bestowed the title of "Colonel." The item, however, was copied broadcast, of which two months later, on Nov. 13, 1886, Field took note as follows:

The *Pall Mall Budget* for October printed an extended editorial reference to the American possessions of Prince Alexander, the deposed king of Bulgaria. And now comes the *London Truth* with some remarks on the same subject, and from these we take a few lines that may be of interest to Chicago folk: "It is now asserted by the American papers," says the *Truth*, "that Prince Alexander has made considerable purchases under an assumed name (Alexander Marie Wilhelm Ludwig Maraschoff) of real estate in Chicago, Denver, Kansas City and Omaha, and that he is part owner of one of the largest sheep ranches in New Mexico. The prince's property in America is under the charge of Colonel Norton, a well-known attorney of Chicago. Prince Alexander must be possessed of a truly Yankee cuteness if he has managed to squeeze the *pile* for these investments out of Bulgaria in addition to the £70,000 to which I referred recently."

Item number two is a clever commingling of humor and sentiment in verse, worthy of a place in any of Field's books:

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WARD H. LAMON ASLEEP ON HIS LIBRARY FLOOR

*As you, dear Lamon, soundly slept,
With books around you on the floor,
Into this pleasant nook I crept,
To hear the music of your snore.*

*A man who sleeps as now you sleep—
Who pipes as music'ly as you—
Who sinks all care in slumber deep,
As you, O happy man, now do,*

*Must have a conscience fully free
Of troublous pangs and vain ado—
So ever may your slumbers be,
So ever be your conscience, too!*

*And when the last sweet sleep of all
Shall smooth the wrinkles from your brow,
Oh, may God's eyes as kindly fall
Upon your sleep as mine do now.*

Item number three, in unusual meter, conveys a message from the bookish fraternity to a sinner who was tempted by cheaper rents to open an "old and rare book shop" on the north side of Chicago:

TO MR. MAGEE

*It's no wonder you frown, with your stock marked way down—
Och hone, Mr. Magee!
And never a caller from the South side of town—
Och hone, Mr. Magee!
How altered your air
With those creases of care
And that cloud of despair
Where the smiles used to be;
And it's all because some
Kindly buyer won't come—
Och hone, Mr. Magee!*

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Better move out next May; you'll starve if you stay—

Och hone, Mr. Magee!

For trade as a rule, on that side doesn't pay—

Och hone, Mr. Magee!

The South Side's the best,

As the profits attest;

So get down, with the rest

Of us book-bandits be,

And in less than a year

You'll be wealthy as we're

Och hone, Mr. Magee!

You would quickly forget that wail of regret,

Och hone, Mr. Magee!

With customers pining for tomes labelled "Net"—

Och hone, Mr. Magee!

Each morning your store

Would be packed to the door

With sinners galore

And the preachers all three

And you'd surely recoup

Getting out of the soup.

Och hone, Mr. Magee!

Guy Magee, who was one of the original sinners along with the preachers three—Gunsaulus, Bristol and Stryker—took the advice of the sinner-in-chief, but whether he recouped at their expense deponent saith not.

The James S. Norton, whom Field breveted Colonel above, was one of our friends who was frequently made the target of Field's gibes and satires. These finally drew fire in these rhymes:

TO EUGENE FIELD

Forgive, dear youth, the forwardness

Of her who blushing sends you this,

Because she must her love confess,

Alas! Alas! A lass she is.

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*Long, long, so long her timid heart
Has held its joy in secrecy,
Being by Nature's cunning art
So made, so made, so maidenly.*

*She knew you once, but as a pen
In humor dipt in wisdom's pool,
And gladly gave her homage then
To one, to one, too wonderful;*

*But having seen your face, so mild,
So pale, so full of animus,
She can but cry in accents wild
Eugene! Eugene! You genius!*

CHAPTER XII

AS A POLITICAL PARAGRAPHER

THROUGHOUT his newspaper career Eugene Field was one of the most prolific political paragraphers in the United States. The sharp end of his "Sharps and Flats" was always whittled to a keen point to stir up the animals in what he regarded as the greatest menagerie on earth—the cockpit of national politics. But for politics in any serious sense he had no use. He never took the trouble to study the principles behind any political question under popular discussion. Like Gaul, politics for Field was divided into three parts—Republicans, Democrats and Grafters.

It is easy to understand how he came to be a rock-rooted Republican. His New England ancestry would almost have insured that; but coming of such ancestry and being born in Missouri in the decade when the border states seethed with the sectional animosities that preceded the Civil War, he would have violated every canon of heredity and vicinage had he been anything but Black Republican to the core. To him the Democratic party embodied every tenet subversive of the republican form of government. In his youthful mind it stood for slavery, rebellion and free trade. The last was thrown in, not because he cared a "tinker's dam" (he was scholar enough to leave off the final n) about protection, a tariff for revenue only, or bald free trade; he stood for the boys in blue and the full dinner pail. He scouted the idea that there was anything wrong with the administration of affairs that couldn't be corrected by electing Republicans to office. Where his friend Charles A. Dana exhausted the invective of iteration demanding

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that Cleveland "turn the rascals out," "Field construed it as demanding that he open the gates of Sing Sing so that the prisoners might be free to vote the Tammany ticket.

The campaign of 1884 afforded Field a rare opportunity for the freest exercise of his free lance of satire, epithet and lampoon. When the *Morning News* was committed to Cleveland, more through mistrust of Blaine than any particular admiration for the Democratic party, Field devoted his column to ridicule of Cleveland and praise of Blaine. The spirit of that notable campaign can be judged from a symposium of verse on the several parties engaged in it published on election day, entitled:

RHYMES FOR ALL READERS

FOR PROHIBITIONISTS

*Let all your valiant hulks be full
Of glorious lemonades,
And from your sheaths with courage pull
Your stanch and glittering blades.
We mean the death of demon Rum
And all its damning jobs—
Come, voters! to our standard come,
And vote for honest Hobbs!*

*We'll have no more of sodden gin,
No more of wine and ale—
We'll crucify the whisky skin,
And beer by glass or pail!
Nor sling, nor cocktail, punch nor fixx,
Shall work destructive jobs—
We have a valorous leader, his
Nomenclature's Hobbs!*

*So, rally, voters, to the polls,
And let your ballots drop
For that which fortifies our souls—
The genial ginger pop!
We'll hear no more the drunkard's oath—
No more the widow's sobs,
For by our faith! there is no sin
In doing this for Hobbs.*

AS A POLITICAL PARAGRAPHER



OFF TO SPRINGFIELD AS SPECIAL LEGISLATIVE CORRESPONDENT OF THE "MORNING NEWS"

From a drawing by Eugene Field

The name of Hobbs, who was the Prohibition candidate for Governor of Illinois, was substituted for St. John's for obvious rhyming reasons. He polled 10,766 votes out of a total of over 700,000.

FOR SUFFRAGE

*The men have very plainly shown
By records that are shady,
They cannot run the land alone,
So let's elect a lady.
We know the politicians rave
And vow they're going to shelve 'er,
But we have yet the power to save
The fair and honest Belva.*

*Well, let us try, at any rate—
Perchance by noise and hustle,*

LIFE OF EUGENE FIELD

*We'll find the votes to vindicate
The frisky bang and bustle!
The ballots come from every hand
And will elect her, may be—
Then shall the woman run the land,
The men folks tend the baby!*

*To Blaine's contempt we pay no heed—
We smile at Cleveland's scorning—
Oh, how they'll shiver when they read
The news to-morrow morning!
Stand to your rolling-pins, oh, men,
In patriotic manner—
A tireless zeal should fire you when
A petticoat's your banner!*

(Mark the use of "may be" in the second stanza forty years before it became a catch phrase in common use.)

FOR REPUBLICANS

*Shall this old party die—
This grand old party, born in years
Of slavery's cruel taunts and gyves
And sanctified by women's tears
And glorified by heroes' lives
When treason's hand was high?
Tell me, O men who fought and bled,
And ye, O sons of martyred dead,
Shall this old party die?*

*Shall this old party die?
Whose blood hath hallow'd southern clay
And wiped the curse from Freedom's sod—
Whose principles shall live for aye
Among the grandest works of God—
Come, freemen, make reply—
Say, by your wives' and mothers' tears
And all the memories of the years
Shall this old party die?*

*Shall this old party die?
Not while in human breast remains
A spark of patriotic flame,*

AS A POLITICAL PARAGRAPHER

*Or thought of Slavery's cursed chains,
Or memory of Lincoln's name!
This is the patriot's cry,
"The Right shall vindicate its sway
And God is on our side to-day—
The party cannot die!"*

FOR MUGWUMPS

*"Shall the old party die?"
And pray why not?
Shall Blaine, high priest of shame,
Upon the scroll of fame
Write his besmirched name,
Honor forgot?"*

*"Shall the old party die?"
And pray why not?
Shall Washington's sad eyes
And honest Abe's dear sighs
Grieve, in yon skies
The Nation's rot?"*

*"Shall the old party die?"
And pray why not?
Since seed must die to live,
And death new life will give—
Fresh triumphs to achieve
Indeed, why not?"*

*"Shall the old party die?"
Yes; and be born again
To nobler purpose brought
By the good battle fought,
Its resurrection wrought
Through the defeat of Blaine.*

FOR DEMOCRATS

*At this supreme and solemn hour
When mighty hosts embrace—
When principles contend for power—
What sights engage our view?*

LIFE OF EUGENE FIELD

*A panorama fraught with shame
And black with venal tricks,
The blot that mars our country's name—
The Fraud of Seventy-six.*

*To stigmatize that odious stain
And wipe that blot away,
We come from hillside and from plain
Unto the polls to-day!
The mugwump and the democrat
With honest fervor mix,
To kill the crime which shame begat,
The Fraud of Seventy-six!*

*The Germans with their pails of beer
And sausage—honest souls!
In solid, cheering throngs are here
Around the teeming polls.
Good welcome, honest Dutch, we say,
With all your "yaw" and "nix,"
For with your aid we'll wipe away
The Fraud of Seventy-six!*

*And welcome, too, ye sturdy Celts,
Who rally with the rest,
With your shillalahs in your belts
And shamrock on your breasts.
Oh, help us to retrieve the past,
Thou brave and generous Micks!
Assist us to avenge, at last,
The Fraud of Seventy-six!*

*So, thinking of that hideous crime,
Which foul corruption wrought,
We'll raise our battle cry sublime
Sublime with patriotic thought;
And to our standard in the fray
This legend we affix:
"The Right to-day shall wipe away
The Fraud of Seventy-six!"*

AS A POLITICAL PARAGRAPHER

The election returns next morning awarded the victory to the army that mastered under the banner of "The Fraud of Seventy-six," recruited on many other grounds, and aided in the final assault by the injection into the balloting of a false issue by the famous alliteration "Rum, Romanism and Rebellion." The revised vote stood:

Grover Cleveland, Democrat.....	4,911,017
James G. Blaine, Republican.....	4,848,334
Benjamin F. Butler, Greenback.....	133,825
J. P. St. John, Prohibition.....	151,809
Belva A. B. Lockwood, Equal Rights.....	also ran
Scattering	11,000

On the day when it was finally conceded that Cleveland had carried New York Field enveloped himself in a shroud of newspapers, laid himself out across the city department floor, and summoned all the Democrats, Mugwumps, Greenbackers and Equal Rights Suffragists in the office to tramp across his prostrate but unregenerate Republican form. The invitation was accepted with amiable hilarity.

Field should be exonerated for the limping verse of the Mugwump reply to the Republican challenge, the perpetration of which he assigned to me, as he did on other occasions when he wanted something done he did not want to do himself. That Field's campaign verse of 1884 did not always have as much serious intent behind it as the above specimens, may be judged from the following at the expense of the father of the present Postmaster-General—father and son being fast friends of the poet:

THE SITUATION IN INDIANA

*I met an Indiana girl
Upon the train to-day—
A comely miss with golden curl
And eyes of kindly gray.*

LIFE OF EUGENE FIELD

*"How sets the Indiana tide,
I pray you tell me true?"
I asked, and then the maid replied
"Our folks are all for New!"*

*Nay, little one; why answer so,
When my intent was plain?
I mean, "Will Indiana go
For Cleveland or for Blaine?"
"Ah, sir," the pretty creature cried,
"My answer was most true,
When to your query I replied
Our folks are all for New!"*

*"But, stay!" I said, "you surely know
Election day is near—
Now how will Indiana go
For president this year?
Will Cleveland grandly forge ahead,
Or Blaine pull safely through?"
"I cannot answer that," she said,
"For we are all for New."*

*Vain were my efforts to explain
The canvass to the maid,
The artful dodges wrought by Blaine—
How Cleveland's cards were played;
She simply shook her pretty head,
The guileless little shrew,
And to my every query said,
"Us folks are all for New!"*

*Ah, me, I ever find it so,
Where'er in life I mix—
The lovely women never know
A thing of politics;
But whither drifts the country's star,
And what are we to do,
When all the lovely women are
For Col. John C. New.*

When the National Democratic Convention in that year,
against the bitter opposition of Mr. Dana and the New

AS A POLITICAL PARAGRAPHER

York *Sun*, persisted in nominating Cleveland "for the enemies he had made" and shelved the "Fraud of Seventy-six" as the paramount issue, Field could not resist the opportunity of picturing his friend in the uncongenial rôle of eating crow. This he did with a touch so ingratiatingly tender that Mr. Dana enjoyed the meal for the dressing.

MR. DANA GOES WOOING

*O beautiful bird with the ebony wing
And voice like a siren of old,
Come sit on the bough of my window and sing—
Oh, pause in thy meaningless flight
And sing to my soul as the night
Swoops down o'er the meadow and wold
And chills me, O rapturous thing!*

*O beautiful songster with eyes like the sloe,
Come in from thy perch on the vines,
For my heart is aflame and my palate's aglow
For the sympathy you can bring,
O bird of the ebony wing—
And my famished system unceasingly pines
For thy sweet consolation, O crow!*

But Mr. Dana put the dish of crow from him and came out boldly and alone for Ben Butlér, the Greenback candidate, on a platform whose every plank he detested. Artemus Ward's pet kangaroo was not as "amoosin' a little rascal" as the *Sun* was in that memorable campaign of '84.

Another of America's great editors, Joseph Medill, the founder of the Chicago *Tribune*, that now arrogates the title of the World's Greatest Newspaper, divided with Mr. Dana the friendly attentions of Field in 1884. He credited Mr. Medill with a consuming ambition to represent the United States at the Quai D'Orsay, which was to be achieved through the election of Mr. Blaine. He represented Mr. Medill as taking daily lessons in French so as to acquit himself with dignity at the French court. The ver-

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dict of November 4 will explain the point of the following verses:

PARLEZ-VOUS FRANÇAIS?

*The old man sits veiled in gloom,
His bosom heaves with dire dismay;
For in that editorial room
There booms no presidential boom,
And folks no longer come that way
To whisper, "Parlez-vous Français?"*

*Gone is the time he hoped to be
A diplomat in Paris gay—
When, far across the briny sea,
The festive gamins, TRES JOLIS,
And fair grisettes décolletées
Should murmur, "Parlez-vous Français?"*

*So let the poor old Joseph rest
And let him pine his life away;
Nor vex that journalistic breath
Which by a hopeless grief's distressed
The hopeless grief he never may
Respond to, "Parlez-vous Français?"*

On the next day Field had Mr. Medill partly recovered from his hopeless distress in one of his cleverest bits of verse:

GEE SWEE ZAMERICANE

*Why should I pine and languish so?
Why should I droop and sigh?
Why should my soul be bowed in woe,
As weary days go by?
Why should I drown in sorrow's sea,
When, through the surf of pain,
This sweet salvation comes to me:
"Gee Swee Zamericane."*

AS A POLITICAL PARAGRAPHER

*I thought diplomacy my forte,
And yearned for deeds of state
Amid the solemn pomp of court
In monarchies effete;
And most I hankered to abide
Hard by the river Seine,
Where I could say, with swelling pride,
"Gee Swee Zamericane!"*

*And this is why I made the flop
Which Reid and Halstead made
And this is why I took a drop
On matters of free trade;
I ate my words of '76,
And boomed the "rascal" Blaine,
And played a thousand Jingo tricks—
"Gee Swee Zamericane!"*

*The die is cast, the boom is o'er,
And Blaine is beaten bad—
The which is why I'm feeling sore
And, likewise, very mad;
For after all this harrowing strife,
I'm likely to remain
What I have been through all my life
"Gee Swee Zamericane!"*

It was shortly after this that Field imposed a temporary indisposition on Mr. Medill in order to suggest that "it would be a fitting tribute of national respect for this most excellent gentleman if the operation of the tariff law were to be suspended during his illness."

Whether carried captive by Mr. Dana's iteration of "the Fraudulent President" whenever the necessity of mentioning Rutherford B. Hayes in the columns of the *Sun* occurred, accompanied by the word "Fraud" branded on his brow, Field became strongly prejudiced against the beneficiary of the alleged Fraud of Seventy-six. He did not go the length of interpreting his initials to mean "Returning Board Hayes," but he seized every opportunity to jeer and sneer

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at the favorite son of Ohio who had picked up the Republican nomination at Cincinnati in 1876 when it had dropped between Roscoe Conkling and James G. Blaine, who had been styled "the Plumed Knight" by Robert G. Ingersoll in a speech of rare eloquence. Therefore it pleased Field mightily to print the following story told by Emory Storrs:

Storrs said he saw Mr. Hayes at the unveiling of the Garfield monument in Cleveland. He carried a black velvet bag on one arm and on one side of the bag was embroidered the legend "R. B. H. from Lucy." Nobody knew him; nobody recognized him; nobody spoke to him—except a policeman, and he told him to keep off the grass.

Through some friend in Omaha Field learned that ex-President Hayes, whose term in the White House had been signalized by the banishment of all wines, beer and spirits, owned some saloon property in that city. For the first time in my memory Field insisted on being sent on a correspondent's special assignment to verify or refute the report. This he did with the following result, as told in his "Sharps and Flats," June 2, 1885:

Mr. R. B. Hayes has disposed of his saloon property in Omaha. A dispatch from Omaha says that the sale was consummated yesterday, \$14,000 being the price paid by Mr. Henry Osthoff, the buyer. There is no doubt that this sale was precipitated by the article which appeared in the *Daily News* a week ago last Saturday; the article gave a description of the Hayes Saloon on 16th Street in Omaha and pictures of the place, its proprietor and its habits. Mr. Hayes suffered no compunctions of conscience about leasing his property for saloon purposes, until the fact that he was leasing it began to be talked about. In less than a fortnight after denouement is made, so to speak, Mr. Hayes parts with the property for less money than it is alleged to be worth. The saloon in question is a pretty common affair, but it is of a much better character than the miserable doggeries which abound in Fremont, Ohio, where Mr. Hayes lives. In fact, we believe Mr. Hayes could point with pride to the Osthoff saloon in Omaha as compared with the eighty gin-mills in full blast in Fremont. The property he has just sold is by no

AS A POLITICAL PARAGRAPHER

means the most disreputable property Mr. Hayes owns in Omaha. The reputation it has is paradisiacal when compared with the reputation of certain other town lots Mr. Hayes has to his credit in the Nebraska metropolis."

For years a photograph of the interior of this Omaha saloon, framed in time-blackened staves from one of its beer kegs adorned the wall of Mr. Ballantyne's room in the old *Daily News* building.

When Field took a scunner, as the Scotch say, to any one, his pen knew no measure it would not go to hold him up to ridicule or contempt, and Mr. Hayes never recovered his respect. For Mrs. Hayes, the Lucy of the bag incident, he had sincere admiration because he believed her to be genuine in her devotion to Rutherford and his chicken farm.

It would be easy to fill pages with Field's squibs at the expense of local politicians, but their points mainly perished with their printing or the day after would be forgotten in the laughter over some fresh sally. When prose did not serve, he served his vagrant thought up in verse, thus:

*We've come from Indiany, five hundred miles or more,
Supposin' we wuz goin' to git the nomination shore;
For Colonel New told us (in that noospaper o' his)
That we cud hev the airth, if we'd only tend to biz.
But here we've ben slavin' more like hosses than like men
To diskiver that the people do not hanker after Ben.
It is for Jeemes G. Blaine an' not for Harrison they shout,
And the gobble-uns 'il git us*

*Ef we
Don't
Watch
Out!*

Field and General John A. Logan were intimate friends, but Field could never resist the pleasure of the English purist he was, of emphasizing the general's mixed metaphors and other perversions of the English tongue. When on one occasion the general, in a burst of unpremeditated eloquence,

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spoke of "the day when the bloody hand of rebellion stalked through the land," Field welcomed that bloody hand to his repertory and thenceforward it stalked through his column week after week and never paused "to take a fleeting breath." In the campaign of 1884 visions of a presidential nomination disturbed the general's sleep. Thereupon Field, who had no delusions on the subject, wrote this warning:

LOGAN'S LAMENT

*We never speak as we pass by—
We to Jim Blaine nor him to I;
'Twixt us there floats a cloud of gloom
Since I have found he's got a boom.*

*We never speak as we pass by,
We simply nod and drop an eye;
Yet I can tell by his straight look
The reason why he wrote that book.*

*We never speak as we pass by—
No more we're bound by friendly tie;
The cause of this is very plain.
He's not for me; he's for Jim Blaine.*

This was followed some twelve months later, after the November ballots of 1884 had buried the hopes of Jim and John in a common grave, by the following dirge:

BAR HARBOR: A REMINISCENCE

I

*Upon the sandy, rock-ribb'd shore
One year ago sat you and I.
And heard the sullen breakers roar,
And saw the stately ships go by;
And wanton ocean breezes fanned
Your cheeks into a ruddy glow,
And I—I pressed your feverish hand
One year ago.*

AS A POLITICAL PARAGRAPHER

II

*The ocean rose, the mountains fell—
And those fair castles we had reared
Were blighted by the breath of hell,
And every prospect disappeared;
Revenge incarnate overthrew
And wrapped in eternal woe
The mutual pleasing hopes we knew
One year ago!*

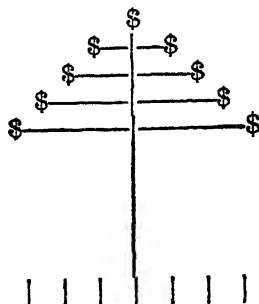
III

*I sit to-night in sorrow, and
I watch the stately ships go by—
The hand I hold is not your hand—
Alas! 'tis but a ten-spot high!
This is the hardest deal of all—
Oh, why should fate pursue me so,
To mind me of that cruel fall—
One year ago!*

One of the cleverest and most creditable of Field's participations in Illinois state politics was that in the senatorial campaign at Springfield in the winter of 1885 when the Democrats, with the aid of the Greenbackers, thought to defeat General Logan's reelection. Congressman Morrison, "Horizontal Bill," as he was called, was the Democratic nominee. As day after day's balloting went by without a choice and the opposition bethought themselves that a fresh candidate with a barrel of "soap" could turn the trick, and Judge Lambert Tree, subsequently our minister to Belgium, qualified for the emergency, for one day it looked as if General Logan's goose was cooked. But the combination of Judge Tree's name and wealth and his nearness with it were just to Field's fancy and the next day he

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opened up with the following illustration constructed with rules and dollar signs:



"Here we have a tree. How Green the Tree is! Can you See the Lightning? Oh, how red and Vivid the Lightning is! Will the Lightning strike the Tree? Children, that is a Conundrum; we answer conundrums in our Weekly Edition, but not in our daily."

This was followed up next day with a briefer paragraph that ran:

"The Lightning did not strike the Green Tree. But the Springfield Politicians did. This is Why the Tree is Green."

These two paragraphs laid the train for what was to be Field's most celebrated political satire, which he regarded as worthy a place in the presentation manuscript volume of his best verse prior to 1887, and which for its literary merit alone, aside from its exquisite humor is entitled to rank with the classic political satires in English.

The timely, or untimely, death—as viewed from a Republican or Democratic standpoint—of a Democratic assemblyman enabled the Republicans to elect their man in a by-election, and the deadlock was broken by General

The Lambert Tree.
 x

Oh, tell me not of the bubbling bay
 Nor the year by the new day grave,
 And swift me not in spirit away
 Where the sorrowing willows wave;
 Let the chag bark walnut bleed its shade
 With the elm's on the verdant lea —
 But let us hie to the distant glade
 Where blossoms the Lambert tree.

The maple reeks with a toothsome sap
 That flavors the brown buckwheat,
 And the oak drops down into earth's green lap
 Her fruit for the swine to eat;
 But the Lambert tree has a grander scope
 In its home on the distant wold,
 For the sap of the Lambert tree is soap
 And its beautiful fruit is gold.

So sing no song of the futile fir —
 No song of the tranquil teak;
 Nor the chestnut tree with its bristling burs,
 Nor the pawpaw of Posey creek;
 But free ring oval with a heavenly calm
 And bring sweet dreams to me
 By singing a psalm of the itching psalm
 And the blossoming Lambert tree.

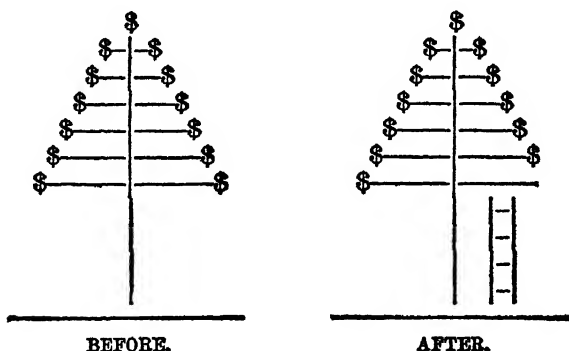
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May 19th, 1885.

THE LAMBERT TREE

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Logan's return by the bare 103 votes necessary to election. This was duly celebrated next morning by Field in the following illustrated sylvan scene and the accompanying quatrain:



*There came a burst of thundersound.
The jedge—oh, where was he?
His twigs were strewn for miles around
He was a blasted tree.*

THE WHITE HOUSE BALLADS

President Cleveland's marriage in the White House on June 2, 1886, to Miss Frances Folsom had a wonderfully mollifying effect on Field's bitterness over the defeat of his champion, the Plumed Knight of Maine. And almost before we had time to note the change that had come over the complexion of his political rigs, he burst forth in a series of ballads on the domestic felicities of the White House. First there was

THE TYING OF THE TIE

Its general tenor can be judged by these stanzas:

AS A POLITICAL PARAGRAPHER

The White House Ballads.

The Tying of the Tie.

Now was Sir Grover passing wroth -
"A murrain seize the man," he quoth,
"Who first invented ties!
Egad, they are a grievous bore,
And tying of them vereth sore
A person of my age!"

So, at his feet upon the floor
Were spent the neckties by the score
And collars all awreck;
And good Sir Grover's cheeks were flame,
And good Sir Grover's arms were lame
With wrestling at his neck.

But much it joyed him when he heard
Sir Daniel say: "I fain will gird
Your necktie on for you
So 'twill not cause you constant fear
Of bobbing round beneath your ear
Or setting you askew."

Sir Daniel grasped one paltry tie
And with a calm, heroic eye
And confidential air
(As who should say, "Odds bobs, I vow
There's nothing like the knowing how"),
He mounted on a chair.

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Sir Daniel (Manning) finally relieved the painful situation by mounting on a chair and deftly "tied the tie," whereat Sir Grover "heaved a grateful sigh." Next followed

THE KISSING OF THE BRIDE

which was Field's pet and would have been esteemed a *cheef doover* by Three Fingered Hoover. The second and third stanzas must suffice, the first merely recording that Sir Grover was minded to "salute the bride."

THE KISSING OF THE BRIDE

*Whereat, upon her virgin cheek
So smooth and plump and comely eke
He did implant a smack
So lusty that the walls around
Gave back an echo to the sound
As they had like to crack.*

*No modern salutation this
No mincing, maudlin, mugwump kiss,
To chill a bride's felicity,
Exploding on that blushing cheek,
Its virile clamor did bespeak
Arcadian simplicity!*

Then ensued THE CUTTING OF THE CAKE, which naturally and poetically fell to the lot of the Lady Frances, who was ready to proceed if she "but had a knife." Trusty blades leaped from their scabbards and were offered to her hand, but she waved them aside, saying that none but Sir Grover's should cut the cake:

*Then did Sir Grover bend him to
His trouser's pocket, whence he drew
A jack-knife big and fat;
The which he gave into her hand—
Whereat the others murmured, and
Did marvel much thereat.*

AS A POLITICAL PARAGRAPHER

*But when the cake was cut, the rest
Made proper hurry to attest,
In knightly phrase emphatic,
How that the cake was passing nice
And how the blade that cleft each slice
Was truly democratic.*

Having carried the nuptial ceremony thus far with truly Jeffersonian simplicity, the ballads ran pleasantly along to THE PASSING OF THE COMPLIMENT, for which Field enlisted the chivalrous son of Mississippi:

*Out spake the courtly Sir Lamar:
"Of all fair brides, you, lady, are
The fairest I have seen;
Not only of this castle grand
But of all hearts throughout the land
Are you acknowledged queen!"*

*Whereat the Lady Frances bowed,
And rapturous murmurs in the crowd
Did presently attest
That of the chestnuts uttered there,
This chestnut was without compare—
Foredating all the rest.*

Having been duly wed the bridal couple sought privacy from the madding crowd in a Blue Mountain retreat, where they were secure from prying eyes but not from the roaming fancy of the balladist. He followed the happy pair into a bosky nook, where purred a "limpid mountain brook" where Sir Grover essayed to fish. But when he sought to bait his hook with "a squirming," fat and comely worm, the lady screamed and frightened the trout away. Whereat Sir Grover grew wrath and did chide his bride, until she left him in a pout. But she quickly forgot her grief and would have been perfectly happy had not a spider come "gliding from his lair with horrid fangs and eyes," whereupon

*Straight to Sir Grover's arms she flew
With grewsome plaints and cries.*

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Instead of greeting her with sympathy for her fears,
and stepping manfully between his lady and the spider,

*Sir Grover drew his line ashore—
Right rueful frowns his visage wore—
And quoth: "I were a mome
If, spite her pleadings and her pouts
When next I go to fish for trouts
I leave her not at home."*

It were an ill favor to quit the White House Ballads with this tiff between the sweet lady and her fisherman groom by the side of that Blue Mountain brook, so Field bethought him of PIE as the great reconciler of statesmen to their lot of having to meet every situation with a glad hand. So the Ballads close with

THE PIE

*King Grover at his table round
Sat feasting once, and there was sound
Of good things said and sly,
When presently King Grover spake—
"A murrain seize this futile cake—
Come, Daniel, pass the pie!"*

*Then quoth Sir Daniel, flaming hot;
Pie hath not been in Camelot
Since Arthur was our King;
Soothly, I ween 'twere vain to make
Demand for pie when there is cake,
For pie's a ribald thing!"*

*"Mauger King Arthur's high degree,
Which ill beseemeth mine and me,"
King Grover answered flat;
"I WILL have pie three times per day,
Let dotards cavil as they may—
And pumpkin pie at that!"*

AS A POLITICAL PARAGRAPHER

*Then frowning a prodigious frown,
Sir Daniel pulled his visor down,
And with a mighty sigh,
Out strode he to the kitchen, where
He bade the varlet slaves prepare
Three times per diem, pie!*

*Thenceforth King Grover was content,
And all his reign in peace was spent,
And when 'twas questioned why
He waxed so hale and why, the while,
The whole domain was free from guile,
He simply answered, "Pie."*

This ballad is worthy a place in Field's poems alongside of APPLE-PIE AND CHEESE and his many other verses in honor of his chosen pastry. And if Eugene Field were writing this with autobiographic truth and his undying sense of the pro-sequence of matrimonial events he would conclude this chapter with this sweet bit of rhythm:

To G. C.

*They say our President has stuck
Above his good wife's door
The sign provocative of luck,
A horseshoe—nothing more.*

*Be hushed, O party hates, the while
That emblem lingers there,
And thou, dear fates, propitious smile
Upon the wedded pair.*

*I've tried the horseshoe's weird intent
And felt its potent joy—
God bless you, Mr. President,
And may it be a boy.*

With a few changes in names and minor incidents and the burdens multiplied by millions, the following protest

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against the sale of naval ships might have been written in 1925:

*From Washington there comes the cry
That those staunch gallant ships of old,
Which stood us well in days gone by,
Have from the auction-block been sold.
O shade of Robeson! is it true,
And can such desecration be?
And Thompson, Roach and Chandler, too—
Why are ye silent, all of ye?*

*What, sell the stately ships you built
And in whose gilded, painted hold
Your wine, if not your blood, you spilt—
Likewise the grateful public's gold;
The lordly ships that did beguile
With frequent trips official ills
And made your burdens easier while
The patient country paid the bills.*

CHAPTER XIII

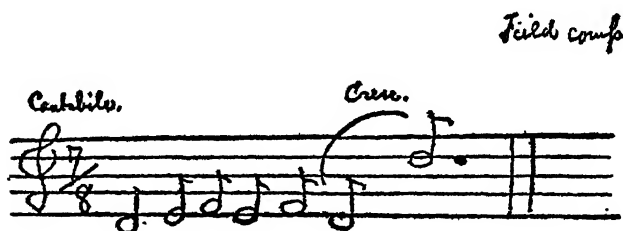
METHODS OF HIS DAILY WORK

INTEREST must always attach to the methods by which a writer of Field's peculiar genius accomplishes the remarkable task of filling a daily column of "leaded agate, first line brevier" 313 days a year for six years and intermittently for six years more. This particular form for paragraphic items was adopted as a printer's device to deceive the reader's eye into accepting a space-saving type by the use of a larger first line with nonpareil leads between the lines. It produces a more easily read paragraph than the use of a larger type without leads, and the use of the brevier type, which is three sizes larger than agate, completes the illusion. The style was an adoption from the "Sunbeam" column of Mr. Dana's *New York Sun*.

To fill this column required an average of about 2,000 words a day, which is no task at all for a writer with a typewriter and a diarrhea of words, but for a writer as fastidious in the use of words as Eugene Field it was a most remarkable performance. If I remember correctly, it was Anthony Trollope whose daily stunt was a thousand words and then only when the spirit of composition was working almost automatically, as it mostly did with the Trollope family. With Field, the column with its 300 lines of space was there six days of the week, excluding Saturday; for Mr. Lawson's conscientious scruples would not permit a Sunday edition of the *Morning News*, but, with strange inconsistency, required his staff to labor on the Sabbath to make the paper hum on Monday. The nature of Field's work enabled him to avoid Sunday work by sawing wood, as he called it, before matinées on Saturday.

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But never did mortal saw wood with less effort than Eugene Field. He arrived at the office about eleven o'clock, but never settled down to write before three o'clock. In the interim he puttered over a stack of our "esteemed contemporaries" selected for him by the exchange editor, entertained a motley throng of visitors, mostly from out of town, queered every member of the staff and generally interfered with the orderly routine of the office. From the hour he climbed laboriously up the steep and narrow stairs to the moment he settled down to write, no one knew where he was going to break out next. The only pause in this reign of disorder came when the hour for luncheon arrived. Then the office boy was summoned to deliver an intimation to me that the hour had struck when Nature craved sustenance. Sometimes it was a bar of music scrawled on a scrap of paper like this:



Or more frequently it was a scrawl in old Field style English, like this:

PUISSANT AND TRIUMPHANT LORD,

By my halidom it doth mind me to hold discourse with thee.
Come thou privily to my castle beyond the moat, an' thou wilt.

In all fealty, my liege,
Thy gentle vassal,

THE GOOD KNIGHT

His Mark.

Sometimes the summons would come from the counting



MENU OF BON VOYAGE LUNCHEON TO MR. LAWSON

Drawings by Sclanders, text and ideas by Field.

- | | |
|--|------------------------------|
| 1. M. E. STONE | 5. MR. LAWSON'S EMPTY DESK |
| 2. CASHIER'S CAGE | 6. COMPOSING ROOM |
| 3. JOHN F. BALLANTYNE AND HIS DOG
"SNIP" | 7. SLASON THOMPSON |
| 4. THE PRINTER'S DEVIL, FIELD'S BÊTE
NOIR | 8. EUGENE FIELD HARD AT WORK |

METHODS OF HIS DAILY WORK

room on the first floor, sent up two flights of stairs by a messenger who, with a grin, would deliver something like this:

SIR SLOSSON,

The Good but Impecunious Knight bides in the business office, and there soothly will he tarry till you come anon. So speed thee, bearing with thee ducats, that in thy sweet company and by thy joyous courtesy the Good Knight may be regaled with great and sumptuous cheer withal.

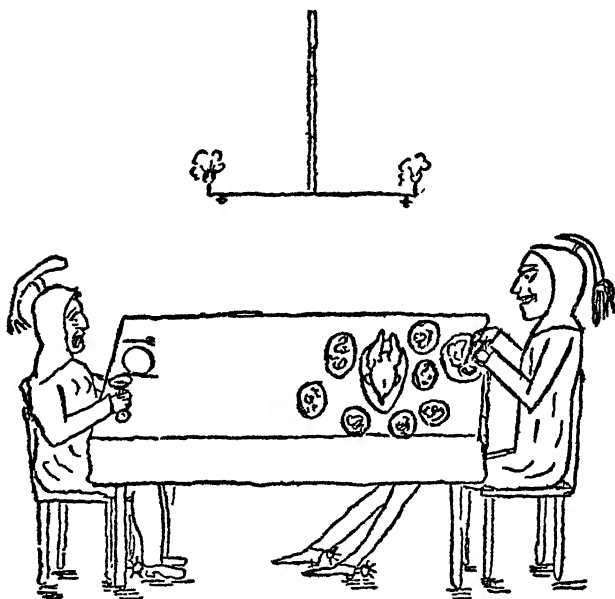
THE GOOD KNIGHT

Then we would sally—we never walked, strolled or sauntered—to the German restaurant around the corner on Madison Street, where the coffee and coffee-cake were excellent, the sandwiches generous and the pie, to which Field was faithful, execrable. Field's idea of these tête-à-tête luncheons has been preserved in the sketch on page 238, which he considered a masterpiece—especially in the disposition of the refreshments.

Having duly regaled ourselves with Henrici's sumptuous fare, we would walk three blocks to McClurg's bookstore to nibble at a dessert of Old English authors, sacred and profane, until it was time to get back to the office for the serious business of the day. By three o'clock Field was ready to go to work and then "Peace reigned in Warsaw," or Field would silence all other noises by banging on the square of sheet iron that hung above his desk and served as a gong to call the office boy. Two pictures have been preserved which show Field at work. The one is a blueprint photograph, albeit a snapshot, for which he posed, as he never wrote with collar and neatly tied necktie on; the other a pencil drawing by our artist friend Sclanders, which is a more faithful portrait of the author of "Little Boy Blue" at work. Except for the magnified feet and legs, the blueprint photograph is the most lifelike and characteristic portrait in existence. The poise of the head and the whole

LIFE OF EUGENE FIELD

expression of the face and form of the head is lifelike to a degree not preserved in any of his other photographs. But it requires the Sclanders' study to perfect the scene when Field buckled down to work. He really sat on his back-



*With great and sumptuous cheer and witty
joyous discourse, the good Knight
Slossow regaleth the good Knight
Eugene sans peur et sans monie.*

TWO GOOD KNIGHTS AT FEAST

From a drawing by Eugene Field

bone, as the saying is. His slippers, sans counters, that hung from his toes, a decorative 40-lb. dumb-bell that he never touched, the correctly placed cuspidor within easy firing distance, the imposing electric fixture, and the "Poetry" poster on the wall with the half-effaced "Order"

METHODS OF HIS DAILY WORK

beneath it, all tell better than any words can, how the poet of childhood looked when he was at his best. It is hard for me to believe that Field ever wrote anything lying down until he was too weak to sit up. He was an inveterate reader in bed, but it would take a flashlight photograph to convince anyone who really knew Field that he wrote in bed before he returned from England, a sick man. Field's "boudoir," as he called it, was further embellished with a burglar's "kit" and beside it hung a convict's suit and—thereby hangs a tale; which I will let Mr. Stone tell:

No sooner had Field arrived in Chicago than he began his pranks. A month later we reached Thanksgiving Day. It was our custom to give each married employe of the paper a turkey on that occasion. But not for Field. He would have none of it. A day or two before the holiday I received a formal letter, written in his unmistakable script, suggesting that if it was all the same to me he would prefer a suit of clothes, as he had no particular use for a turkey. The state prison was forty miles away and the warden was a particular friend. From him I obtained a suit of "stripes" that would fit my petitioner, and when Thanksgiving Day arrived the "suit of clothes" was presented in a package which when opened surprised and delighted him beyond measure. He was tall, slender, smooth-shaven, almost bald, the little hair he had being cut very short.

Now and then a country editor would call and I would assign a reporter to show him over the establishment. In his wanderings he would reach this loft (the city department out of which Field's room opened). While the conducting reporter dilated upon the wonders of a metropolitan newspaper, the door of one of the petty dens would open and a tall, gaunt creature almost bald and smooth-shaven, in prison stripes and an old pair of carpet slippers, would step out, seize a poker and proceed to shake down the ashes in the stove. This done he would set about sweeping the floor and raising a cloud of dust that would choke a behemoth. The visiting editor, gasping, would ask what this meant. With well-simulated embarrassment, the reporter would reply that he was afraid to explain. This was the skeleton in our closet. It was the one thing about the place that all the employes disapproved of but did not dare to discuss. In strictest confidence, however, he would tell. The editor

LIFE OF EUGENE FIELD

of the paper was a friend of the warden of the penitentiary and took advantage of that fact. "The man before you," he would say, "is a life convict. He is a trusty. To save expense Mr. Stone has induced the warden, Major McClaughry, to let him have this poor wretch to serve as janitor for the *Daily News* office. It is all wrong, but, you can well understand, we cannot afford to open our mouths about it." The editor would join with the sympathetic reporter in denouncing the outrage, while Field, the wretched convict, was chuckling over the prank. In one case, a week later, down in central Illinois, a weekly paper appeared with an editorial pouring out its vials of wrath upon Major McClaughry and myself for this shameless performance.

Mr. Stone accompanied this story with a full-length portrait of Field, rear view, drawn by himself, "reading his beautiful poems at the Press Banquet." He pictured himself with a long tail dress coat over striped Joliet trousers and carpet slippers. His neck protruded, as he would say, from a high collar and his ears were like two sails of a windmill.

Such byplay as this episode of the convict suit, which hung in his box stall until it rotted from its peg, never interrupted the rapid flow of his pen more than a few minutes. So by six o'clock his copy, enough to fill his column to a line, was ready. Occasionally he introduced it with some such item as this:

We desire to announce that Mademoiselle Rhea, the gifted Flanders maid, who has the finest wardrobe on the stage, will play a season of bad brogue and flash dresses in the city very soon. This announcement, however, will never see the dawn of November 13th, and we kiss it a fond farewell as we cheerfully submit it as a sop to Cerberus.

The point of which was that Field had a theory that Ballantyne, our managing editor, would not think he was exercising the full authority of editorship if something in Field's column was not sacrificed to his watchful censorship. Therefore it was Field's wont occasionally to insert one or

METHODS OF HIS DAILY WORK

two paragraphs like the foregoing to draw the blue pencil fire, so that something of questionable propriety might pass. Ballantyne was a more exacting censor and verbal purist than Stone, and his Scotch literalness often missed the humor of a paragraph, which Stone never did.

The sop to Cerberus having worked its charm and the copy been forwarded to the composing room, Field would either go home to dinner or, if the spirit moved him, he would despatch the grinning office boy to me with notes like these, selected at random from a bunch of similar import:

Good and Gentle Knight:

If so be ye pine and so hanker after me this night, I pray you come now to the secret lair near the moat on the next floor, and there you will eke descry me. There we will discourse on love and other joyous matters, and until then I shall be, as I have ever been,

Your most courteous friend,
E. FIELD.

An it please the good and gentle Knight, Sir Slosson Thompson, his friend in very sooth, the honest Knight, will arrive at his castle this day at the 8th hour, being minded to partake of Sir Slosson's cheer and regale him with the wealth of his joyous discourse.

THE GOOD KNIGHT.

When Field dined at home it did not mean that he stayed there for five nights out of the week. He spent the better part of the evening at one of the principal downtown or "loop" theaters, of which there were five. On a majority of these parties he was accompanied by Mrs. Field and her sister, Miss Comstock, who later became Mrs. Ballantyne. When it was a family party, Ballantyne and I usually joined it as the curtain went up on the last act, and an adjournment was in order to the nearest restaurant, where we supped and gossiped until it was time to catch the last north-

bound car. When Field stayed down town to a stag party with me or any of his intimates, we would adjourn to one of the theaters where we could recruit a star like "Billy" Florence or a leading actor to join in a round of steak and story at Billy Boyle's all-night English chophouse. That famous resort, now alas no more, was situated on Calhoun Place, between Dearborn and Clark Streets, and was for many years the most famous eating house in Chicago, if not in America. For chops, steaks and baked Irish potatoes, its equal was not to be found on this side of Lands End. Long after we had ceased to go there, so long that our patronage could not have had any share in the catastrophe, it went into the sheriff's hands. Field seized upon this to pen the following serio-comic reminiscence of a unique institution in Chicago life:

It is unpleasant and it is hard to think of Billy Boyle's chop-house as a thing of the past, for that resort has become so closely identified with certain classes and with certain phases of life in Chicago that it seems that it must necessarily keep right on forever in its delectable career. We much prefer to regard its troubles as temporary, and to believe that presently its hospitable doors will be thrown open again to the same hungry, appreciative patrons who for so many years have partaken of its cheer.

When the sheriff asked Billy Boyle the other day where the key to the door was, Billy seemed to feel hurt. What did Billy know about a key, and what use had he ever found for one in that hospitable spot, whither famished folk of every class gravitated naturally for the certain succor of Billy's larder?

"The door never had a key," said Billy. "Only once in all the time I have been here has the place been closed, and then it was but four hours."

Down in New Orleans there is a famous old saloon called the *Sazeraz*. For fifty-four years it stood open to the thirsty public. Then the City Council passed a Sunday-closing ordinance, and with the enforcement of that law came the discovery that through innocuous desuetude the hinges of the doors to the *Sazeraz* had rusted off, while the doors themselves had become so worm-eaten that they had to be replaced by new ones. The sheriff who pounced down on Billy Boyle in his official capacity must have fancied he had

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struck a second Sazeraz, for the lock upon the door was so rusty and rheumatic through disuse that it absolutely refused to respond to the persuasion of the keys produced for the performance of its functions. We cannot help applauding the steadfastness with which this lock resented the indignity which the official visit of the sheriff implied.

If we were to attempt to make a roster of the names of those who have made the old chop-house their Mecca in seasons of hunger and thirst, we could easily fill a page. So, although you may have never visited the place yourself, it is easy for you to understand that many are the associations and reminiscences which attach to it. There was never any attempt at style there; the rooms were unattractive, save for the savory odors which hung about them; the floors were bare, and the furniture was severe to the degree of rudeness. There was no china in use upon the premises; crockery was good enough; men came there to feed their stomachs, not their eyes.

Boyle's was a resort for politicians, journalists, artists, actors, musicians, merchants, gamblers, professional men generally, and sporting men specially. Boyle himself has always been a lover of the horse and a patron of the turf; naturally, therefore, his restaurant became the rendezvous of horsemen, so-called. Upon the walls there were colored prints, which confirmed any suspicion a stranger might have of the general character of the place, and the *mise en scène* differed in no essential feature from that presented in the typical chop-house one meets in the narrow streets and by-ways of "dear ol' Lunnon."

It is likely that Boyle's has played in its quiet way a more important part in the history of the town than you might suppose. It was here that the lawyers consulted with their clients during the noon hour; politicians came hither to confer with one another and to devise those schemes by which parties were to be humbugged. It was here that the painter and the actor discussed their respective arts; here, too, in the small hours of the morning, the newspaper editor and reporters gathered together to dismiss professional cares and jealousies for the nonce, and to feed in the most amicable spirit from the same trough. Jobs were put up, coups planned, reconciliations effected, schemes devised, combinations suggested, news exploited and scandals disseminated, friendships strengthened, acquaintances made—all this at Billy Boyle's—so you see it would have been hard to find a better field in which to study human nature, for hither came people of every class and kind with their ambitions, hopes, purposes and eccentricities.

LIFE OF EUGENE FIELD

The glory of the house of Boyle was the quality of viands served there, and nowhere else in the world was it possible to find finer steaks and chops. These substantials were served with a liberality that would surely have astounded those who did not understand that the patrons of Billy Boyle's were men blest with long appetites and robust digestions. Spanish stew was one of the specialties; so were baked potatoes, and so were Spanish roasted onions. It was the custom to sit and smoke after the meal had been disposed of, and the quality of the cigars sold in the place was the best; at night particularly—say after the newspaper clans began to gather—Boyle's wore the aspect of a smoke-talk in full blast. Harmony invariably prevailed. If, perchance, any discordant note was sounded it was speedily hushed. Charlie, the man behind the bar, had a way of his own of preserving the peace. He was a gentleman of few words, slow to anger, but sure of wrath. Experience had taught him that the best persuasive to respectful and reverential order was a spoke of a wagon-wheel. One of these weapons lay within reach, and it never failed to restore tranquillity when produced and wielded at the proper moment by Charlie. The consequence was that Charlie inspired all good men with respect and all evil men with terror, and the result was harmony of the most enjoyable character. Perhaps if Charlie had been on watch when that horrid sheriff arrived on his meddlesome errand, Billy Boyle's might still be open to the rich and the poor who now meet together in that historic alley and bemoan the passing of their old point of rendezvous. Perhaps—but why indulge in surmises? It is pleasanter to regard the whole disagreeable sheriff business as an episode that is soon to pass away and to be forgotten, if not forgiven.

Surely the clouds will roll by; surely you, Septimius, and you, Tuliarchus mine, will presently gather with others of the old cronies around the hospitable board of that genial host to renew once more the delights of days and nights endeared to us in memory!

Thus Field has painted a pen-picture redolent of the resort of a hundred memories. Billy Boyle's did not succumb for lack of patronage, but to his love of the race track and the abuse of his credit-check system. As Field has mentioned, gamblers constituted a goodly percentage of his patrons. After midnight they were his most liberal customers. Winning or losing, their appetites were always good and their tastes epicurean. Winning they supped like

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princes and paid like goldsmiths. Losing whetted their appetites, they ate to forget it, and the I. O. U. checks on Billy's spindles required weights to keep them down. In flush times the majority of these checks were redeemed, but the residue at the bottom grew thicker and dirtier and more hopeless. Hence the sheriff.

We of the *Morning News*—Field, Stone, Ballantyne, Reilly and I—frequented Boyle's until the "pernicious activity" of our newspaper work, calling on the city administration to close the gambling houses, resulted in our being regarded as intruders if not spies and informers, and the atmosphere of the place became too chilly for enjoyment. So we transferred our custom and study of "folly as it flies" to the Boston Oyster House on the corner of Clark and Madison Streets where the Morrison Hotel stands and rears its thirty-odd-story tower. Field selected this rendezvous because its sign savored of baked beans, brown bread and codfish. Here we were assigned a special table in the corner near the grill range, where we were welcomed nightly by the cheerful chirping of a cricket, which Field "opined" was intended solely for him. The Boston had the advantage of Boyle's that here we could bring our "wimmen folks" after the theatre, and it was here that, through a verse scrawled on a stray piece of paper, we first learned of the serious attentions of our managing editor to Mrs. Field's youngest sister. It ran:

*A quart taken out of the ice-box,
A dozen broiled over the fire,
Then home from the show
With her long-legged beau,
What more can our sister desire.*

It was at the Boston that Field varied his diet of pie—apple preferred, but any sort of pie—and coffee with what he described as "the staying qualities as well as the pleasing aspect of a Welsh rabbit."

LIFE OF EUGENE FIELD

Field seldom varied his routine of work or took a vacation. When the legislature was in session he would take a run up to Springfield, sending his column of political comment in by mail. I have told how he once went out to Omaha to confirm the stories of ex-President Hayes' ownership of saloon property there. On another occasion the incongruity of an ex-president and his wife running a chicken farm invited a similar visit to Fremont, Ohio. Before going to Omaha, Field had taken the precaution to prepare enough "Sharps and Flats" to fill his column until his return. He neglected this precaution before starting for Fremont, on the understanding that his associates of the editorial staff would stop the gap. This we readily did. The habit had grown on Field of using a stock set of expressions in introducing his paragraphic skits with such "country journalisms" as:

"We opine,"

"Anent the story,"

"We are free to admit,"

"We violate no confidence,"

"It is stated, though not authoritatively,"

"Our versatile friend,"

"We learn from a responsible source,"

"Our distinguished fellow-townsmen," etc.

To these were added as lavish a bestowal of titles, civil and military, as would have delighted the heart of Southern chivalry.

So when Field was safely off to Fremont, we produced a column in which these expressions fairly danced in riotous abandon with the names of his best-known friends. We opined and violated every confidence imaginable with such dignitaries as Colonel Phocion Howard, of the Batavia frog-farm, Major Moses P. Hand, the flaming sword of the *Philadelphia Press*, Senator G. Frisbie Hoar, Major Charles Hasbrook, Colonel William E. Curtis, Colonel John A. Joyce, Colonel Fred W. Nye, Major E. Clarence

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Stedman and Colonels Dana, Watterson and Halstead; and we taxed the flowers of Field's vocabulary in fulsome encomiums on Madame Modjeska, Minnie Maddern, Lotta and Marie Jansen. If any one of Field's friends missed "favorable mention" in that column, it was a slip of memory or Mr. Stone's blue pencil came to the rescue.

When Field returned, that column drove all thoughts of Mr. Hayes' hens and roosters from his mind and two days later he printed this retort courteous:

MAY THE 20TH, 1885

*As when the bright, the ever-glorious sun
In eastern slopes lifts up his flaming head,
And sees the harm the envious night has done
While he, the solar orb, has been abed—
Sees here a yawl wrecked on the slushy sea,
Or there a chestnut from its roost blown down,
Or last year's birdnests scattered on the lea,
Or some state scandal rampant in the town—
Sees everywhere the petty work of night,
Of sneaking winds and cunning, coward rats,
Of hooting owls, of bugaboo and sprite,
Of roaches, wolves and serenading cats—
Beholds and smiles that bagatelles so small
Should seek to devastate the slumbering earth—
Then smiling still he pours on one and all
The warmth and sunshine of his grateful mirth;
So he who rules in humor's vast domain,
Borne far away by some Ohio train,
Returns again, like some recurring sun,
And shining, God-like, on the furrowed plain
Repairs the ills that envious hands have done.*

However, the envious hands had not violated the humorist's confidences in vain. Never again did he employ those shopworn expressions except in self-evident satire. He shunned them with a marked gain in the purity of his diction.

There is a line in the foregoing bit of verse that might

LIFE OF EUGENE FIELD

well be taken to heart by that large body of Eugene Field's admirers who were never satisfied to take him as he was, a gifted, merry-hearted songster and satirist, and were continually longing for the day when he would put aside the cap and bells and write something worthy of his genius. His brother Roswell added his voice to the clamor for Eugene to give over mirth for the serious organ peal "that mounts up and shakes and falls," when he wrote, "The curse of comedy was on Eugene, and it was not until he threw off that yoke and gave expression to the better and sweeter thoughts within him that, as with Bion, the voice of song flowed freely from his heart."

Happily Eugene preferred the rôle

of him who rules in humor's vast domain, and pours on one and all the warmth and sunshine of his grateful mirth,

as he himself has put it.

His daily column was a crystallization of the busy fancies that ran riot through his busy days and nights of light-hearted pleasure. He reflected everything he read and heard and saw, and nothing that interested humanity came amiss to his facile and felicitous pen. Out of the comedy of his nature came the sweetness of his work and out of his association with all kinds and conditions of mankind came that insight into the springs of human passion and action that shines through all that he wrote from "The Robin and the Violet" (1884) down to *The Love Affairs of a Bibliomaniac* (1895).

From the time he arrived in Chicago to the final chapters of the *Love Affairs*, Field's work showed progressive evolution. But it can safely be divided into periods of six years each, the turning point being at the publication of his little books of verse and tales in the year 1889. Before that all he wrote was the fruit of his association with his kind, after that it showed his closer association with books. But nothing could extinguish his gifts of whimsical exaggeration.



ROSWELL FIELD
Eugene Field's Brother.

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tion. As late as October 29th, 1895, he laid aside the *Love Affairs* long enough to regale the readers of the *Morning News* with his idea of the "Crop Reports from East Minonk." The trend of the whole column is indicated in a few items like these:

All are working to get in the corn crop as if they never expected to raise another crop. The schools are almost deserted, and even the school-ma'ams may yet be drafted as huskers. As the season advances the farmers begin to realize the immensity of the crop and the dangers and difficulties of handling it. Owing to its cumbersomeness the old-fashioned way of handling it becomes obsolete and new methods have to be adopted and improved hydraulic machinery procured. Many new uses can be made of the cornstalks, such as flag-poles for schoolhouses, telegraph poles and sewer pipes. By hollowing out a cornstalk it will make the very best of windmill towers, as the plunger-rod can be placed inside, thus protecting it from the weather and if desired an excellent fountain can be obtained by perforating the joints with an awl.

John Squires was going through Trowbridge yesterday morning with an ear of corn when the truck on which it was loaded broke down and it took the hook and ladder company two hours to clear the street so teams could pass.

A substantial new bridge has been built over Crow creek, four miles south of Toluca. During a freshet in August a heavy cornstalk from the Bennington farm floated down and loosened the foundations of the bridge.

A "joint" was recently unearthed near Woodford. A compartment had been made in the base of a cornstalk, in which was a generator connected by a siphon with the ear of corn above, from which the operators had been extracting malt for a couple of weeks past. The place was deserted, but Bill Hemmer is suspected of knowing something about it.

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And so the preposterous stories of the corn crop in East Minonk ran through a score of paragraphs in the personal jargon of the small town newspaper, which had afforded Field genuine amusement for the twenty years of his newspaper life.

It is hard to determine whether it was his innate love of mischief or his unalterable sympathy with its sentiment that for years led him to revive an alleged controversy over the authorship of the lines :

*Laugh, and the world laughs with you;
Weep, and you weep alone,*

in Miss Ella Wheeler's "Solitude," first published in 1883. When Miss Wheeler became Mrs. Wilcox and all room for doubt that she was its author had passed away, he revived the story that Colonel John A. Joyce had written the poem. For his purpose he adopted the method of defending her claims, on the presumption that they had been attacked. If need be he would assume that the poetess proposed to institute legal proceedings to set at rest the authorship of the poem. Against this he would protest as wholly unnecessary. The following conclusion of a long paragraph on the subject will illustrate how he treated it and give a line on his methods in similar literary hoaxes, which he was continually starting :

Now this Joyce affair is simply preposterous ; we do not imagine that there is in America at the present time an ordinarily intelligent person who has ever believed for one moment that Colonel Joyce wrote the poem in question—the poem entitled, "Love and Laughter." Colonel Joyce is an incorrigible practical joker, and his humor has been marvellously tickled by the prodigious worry his jest has cost the Wisconsin bard. The public understands the situation ; there is no good reason why Mrs. Wilcox should fume and fret and scurry



FIELD THE COMEDIAN

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around, all on account of that poem, like a fidgety hen with one chicken. Her claim is universally conceded; there is no shadow of doubt that she wrote the poem in question, and by becoming involved in any further complication on the subject she will simply make a laughing-stock of herself; we would be sorry to see her do that.

It was Field himself and not Colonel Joyce that was prodigiously tickled about the dust he was continually throwing in the public's eye over

*Laugh and the world laughs with you;
Weep and you weep alone.
For the sad old earth must borrow its mirth
But has troubles enough of its own.
Sing and the hills will answer;
Sigh, it is lost on the air,
The echoes bound to a joyful sound,
But shrink from voicing care.*

And by that cue Eugene Field lived and wrote and yet lives.

Another instance of his delight in such literary perversions occurs to me. About forty years ago Sally Pratt McLean achieved wide popular recognition as the author of "The Lost Sheep," the flavor of which can be judged from the first stanza, which ran:

*De massa ob de sheep fol'
Dat guard de sheep fol' bin,
Look out in de gloomerin' meadows
Whar de long night rain begin—
So he call to de hirelin' shep'd,
"Is my sheep, is dey all come in?"
Oh, den says de hirelin' shep'd,
"Dey's some, dey's black and thin,
And some, dey's po' ol' wedda's,
But de res' dey's all brung in—
But de res' dey's all brung in."*

LIFE OF EUGÈNE FIELD

The sequel to this stanza, in which the "massa ob de sheep fol'" himself went out and let "down de ba's" so that "de po' los' sheep dey all comes gadderin' in," appealed strongly to Field, but it did not prevent his attributing the poem to our old friend Colonel Joyce, whom he introduced on all occasions to assume the authorship of things he never wrote, as the following testifies:

Miss Sally McLean, author of *Cape Cod Folks*, claims to have written the dialect poem, "Massa of de Sheep Fold," which the *New York Sun* pronounces a poetic masterpiece. We dislike to contradict Miss McLean, but candor compels us to say that we have reason to believe that she is not the author of the stanzas in question. According to the best of our recollection, this poem was dashed off in the wine room of the Gault House, at Louisville, Ky., by Colonel John A. Joyce, from ten to twenty years ago. Joyce was in the midst of a party of convivial friends. After several cases of champagne had been tossed down, a member of the party said to Colonel Joyce, "Come, old fellow, give us an extempore poem." As Colonel Joyce had not utilized his muse for at least twenty minutes, he cordially assented to the proposition, and while the waiter was bringing a fresh supply of wine Colonel Joyce dashed off the dialect poem so highly praised by the *New York Sun*. We are amazed that he has laid no claim to its authorship since its revival. Unfortunately, all the gentlemen who were present at the time he dashed off the poem are dead, or there would be no trouble in substantiating his claims to its authorship. We distinctly remember he wrote it the same evening he dashed off the pretty poem so violently claimed by and so generally accredited to Mrs. Ella Wheeler Wilcox.

Notwithstanding the obvious earmarks of a hoax cropping out through this paragraph, it was accepted in some

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quarters, much to Field's delight, for, like Puck, he knew "what fools these mortals be."

*And those things do best please me
That befall preposterously.*

Perhaps the most daring of his attributing of his own emanations to noted persons was that of a medley of verses to Judge Thomas M. Cooley in the *Morning News* of January 22, 1887. Judge Cooley, who was one of the most eminent constitutional lawyers of his day, had just then been appointed by President Cleveland to the Interstate Commerce Commission, of which he was the first chairman. Anything more out of character than ascribing to him any poetic compositions, and least of all the incongruous verses which Field did, fell into Puck's category of the preposterous. First there was an alleged paraphrase from Menecrites on old age:

*When age is absent, we are eager for it;
But when it comes, oh! how we all abhor it!
So on the whole, we think we like it better
When it is still a debt, and we the debtor.*

Next Judge Cooley was supposed to toy with the text of Lucian for this to "A Certain Fool":

*A fool when, plagued by fleas at night,
Quoth, "Since these neighbors so despise me
I think I will put out the light,
And then they cannot see to bite me!"*

After perpetrating these alleged paraphrases of the classics, Judge Cooley was credited with the composition of one of the most beautiful lullabies that ever came from Field's pen, entitled, "The Divine Lullaby," opening with:

*I hear thy voice, dear Lord;
I hear it by the stormy sea
When winter nights are black and wild;
And when affright I call to thee,
It calms my fears and whispers me,
"Sleep well, my child."*

LIFE OF EUGENE FIELD

Then Judge Cooley essayed a ballad entitled, "The Vision of the Holy Grail," in that archaic English of which Field was master at that time; and on the heels of this the innocent jurist was credited with "Lines to a Blue Jay," which Field described "as delicate a bit of fun as we have ever read":

*When I have shooed the bird away,
And plucked the plums, a quart or more,
I note that the saucy Jay,
Albeit he had naught to say,
Appeared much bluer than before.*

For weeks after this Field bombarded himself with all sorts of letters praising, criticizing and wondering at the poetic genius of the eminent Michigan jurist. Field wrote to his friend Cowen the week that the Cooley poems were published, "I think they will create somewhat of a sensation; I have put a good deal of work on them." Encouraged by the reception of the Cooley verses, Field tried his hand on some newly discovered verses by Isaac Watts, two of which are gems in their way. The one to "The Human Lad" ran thus:

*Why should a naughty, froward boy
The harmless little fly assail,
Or why his precious time employ
At pulling faithful Rover's tail?*

*Where'er I go, each living thing,
Has its predestined place to fill;
And naught that moves on foot or wing
Was made for boys to vex or kill.*

*The little fly howe'er so frail
Was made on Rover's hide to prey;
And faithful Rover's honest tail
Was made to brush the flies away.*

*So let each bird and beast enjoy
The vain, brief life which God has given,
Whilst I my youthful hours employ
In works that fit the soul for heaven.*

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A companion piece to this was "The Merciful Lad," also attributed to the sweet singer of the *New England Hymn Book* upon which Eugene Field cut his poetic eye-teeth:

A Bad Imitation of Good Dr. Watts.

Through all my life the poor shall find
In me a constant friend,
And on the weak of every kind
My mercy shall attend.

The dumb shall never call on me
In vain for kindly aid,
And in my hands the blind shall see
A bounteous arm displayed.

In all their walks the lame shall know
And feel my goodness near,
And on the deaf will I bestow
My gentlest words of cheer.

'Tis by such finer works as these
Which I delight to do
That men their fellow creatures please
And please their Maker, too.

#

1886.

Field was repaid for the work he put on this hoax by the gravity of the British critic who spurned the thought that Dr. Watts, even with poetic license, could write of the dumb calling, the blind seeing, and the deaf hearing even the gentlest words of cheer.

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After perpetrating these parodies on the "Divine and Moral Songs for the Young," Field paid a handsome tribute to the author of the two poems, "How doth the Little Busy Bee" and "Let dogs delight to bark and bite," and added "We have yet to read a tenderer bit of religious verse than Watt's cradle hymn, 'Hush, my babe, lie still and slumber.'"

It was one of the strange limitations of this peculiar genius that he did not recognize any of the incongruities in the presentation of sacred and profane verses in such immediate juxtaposition. To his mind the sacred took the curse out of the profane, and the profane took the morbid out of the sacred. There was not a thought of the sacrilegious in anything he ever wrote.

CHAPTER XIV

FIELD'S *AUTO-ANALYSIS*

DURING the winter of 1894 the importunity of that class of readers who derive almost as much satisfaction from the possession of an author's autograph as from a perusal of his choice works became so irksome to Eugene Field that he wrote and had printed what he was pleased to call *An Auto-Analysis*. "I give these facts, confessions and observations," he wrote at the time, "for the information of those who, for one reason or another, are applying constantly to me for biographical data concerning myself." The whole document is as ingenious a mingling of fact and fiction as was ever penned. Truths, half-truths and the boldest sort of perversions skip through its paragraphs with utter abandon. It is innocent of any attempt at self-analysis and is possessed of that spirit of witchery which wins its victims with "honest truths" to betray them in matters of real consequence. But Field had two objects in writing this so-called auto-analysis—to save himself the trouble of answering the importunities of uninteresting correspondents and delight himself and his large circle of friends with another wonderfully entertaining and successful hoax. From this point of view it repays real analysis, and no study of its author would be complete without presenting it as an illustration of Field's ingenuity and cleverness, when he set out to fool these mortals.

AN AUTO-ANALYSIS

I was born in St. Louis, Missouri, September 3, 1850, the second, and oldest surviving son of Roswell Martin and Frances (Reed) Field, both natives of Windham County, Vt. Upon the death of

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my mother (1856) I was put in the care of my (paternal) cousin, Miss Mary Field French, at Amherst, Massachusetts.

In 1865 I entered the private school of Rev. James Tufts, Monson, Massachusetts, and there fitted for Williams College, which institution I entered as a freshman in 1868. Upon my father's death in 1869 I entered the Sophomore class of Knox College, Galesburg, Illinois, my guardian, John W. Burgess, now of Columbia College, being then a professor in that institution. But in 1870 I went to Columbia, Missouri, and entered the State University there, and completed my junior year with my brother. In 1872 I visited Europe, spending six months and my patrimony in France, Italy, Ireland and England. In May, 1873, I became a reporter on the *St. Louis Evening Journal*. In October of that year I married Miss Julia Sutherland Comstock (born in Chenango County, New York) of St. Joseph, Missouri, at that time a girl of sixteen. We have had eight children—three daughters and five sons.

Ill health compelled me to visit Europe in 1889; there I remained fourteen months, that time being divided between England, Germany, Holland and Belgium. My residence at present is at Buena Park, a north-shore suburb of Chicago.

My newspaper connections have been as follows: 1875-76, city editor of the *St. Joseph, Missouri, Gazette*; 1876-80, editorial writer on the *St. Louis Journal* and *St. Louis Times-Journal*; 1880-81, managing editor of the *Kansas City Times*; 1881-83, managing editor of the *Denver Tribune*. Since 1883 I have been a contributor to the *Chicago Record* (formerly *Morning News*).

To this point the *Auto-Analysis* is a fairly accurate, albeit prosaic, recital of biographical facts, far removed from analysis. That begins as he continues:

I wrote and published my first bit of verse in 1879; it was entitled, "Christmas Treasures" (see "Little Book of Western Verse"). Just ten years later I began suddenly to write verse very frequently; meanwhile (1883-89) I had labored diligently at writing short stories and tales. Most of these I revised half a dozen times. One, "The Werewolf," as yet unpublished, I have rewritten eight times during the last eight years.

Note: Where Field got the idea that he began to write verse suddenly in 1889 is hard to tell. The verse he wrote

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while on the *Denver Tribune* made a substantial volume and the best verse he ever wrote was scattered all along from 1883 to 1889. There was a spontaneity in his verse which he never quite achieved in his tales, over which, as he says, he "labored diligently," with emphasis on both words. To proceed:

My publications have been, chronologically, as follows:

1. "The Tribune Primer"; Denver, 1832. (Out of print, very scarce.) ("The Model Primer"; illustrated by Hoppin; Treadway, Brooklyn, 1882. A pirate edition.)

2. "Culture's Garland"; Ticknor, Boston, 1887. (Out of print.) "A Little Book of Western Verse"; Chicago, 1889. (Large paper, privately printed and limited.)

"A Little Book of Profitable Tales"; Chicago, 1889. (Large paper, privately printed and limited.)

3. "A Little Book of Western Verse"; Scribners, New York, 1890.

4. "A Little Book of Profitable Tales"; Scribners, New York, 1890.

5. "With Trumpet and Drum"; Scribners, New York, 1892.

6. "Second Book of Verse"; Scribners, New York, 1893.

7. "Echoes from the Sabine Farm." Translations of Horace; McClurg, Chicago, 1893. (In collaboration with my brother, Roswell Martin Field.)

8. Introduction to Stone's First Editions of American Authors; Cambridge, 1893.

9. "The Holy Cross and Other Tales," Stone & Kimball, Cambridge, 1893.

I have a miscellaneous collection of books numbering 3,500, and I am fond of the quaint and curious in every line. I am very fond of dogs, birds and all small pets—a passion not approved of by my wife.

My favorite flower is the carnation, and I adore dolls.

My favorite hymn is "Bounding Billows."

My favorites in fiction are Hawthorne's "Scarlet Letter," "Don Quixote" and "Pilgrim's Progress."

I greatly love Hans Christian Andersen's Tales, and I am deeply interested in folk-lore and fairy tales. I believe in ghosts, in witches, and in fairies.

I should like to own a big astronomical telescope and a twenty-four-tune music box.

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My heroes in history are Martin Luther, Mme. Lamballe, Abraham Lincoln; my favorite poems are Körner's "Battle Prayer," Wordsworth's "We Are Seven," Newman's "Lead Kindly Light," Luther's Hymn, Schiller's "The Diver," Horace's "Fons Bandusiae," and Burns's "Cotter's Saturday Night." I dislike Dante and Byron. I should like to have known Jeremiah the prophet, old man Poggio, Walter Scott, Bonaparte, Hawthorne, Mme. Sontag, Sir John Herschel, Hans Andersen.

My favorite actor is Henry Irving; actress, Mme. Modjeska.

I dislike "Politics," so called.

I should like to have the privilege of voting extended to women.

I am unalterably opposed to capital punishment.

I favor a system of pensions for noble services in literature, art, science, etc. I approve of compulsory education.

If I had my way, I should make the abuse of horses, dogs and cattle a penal offense; I should abolish all dog laws and dog-catchers, and I would punish severely everybody who caught and caged birds.

I dislike all exercise and play all games very indifferently.

I love to read in bed.

I believe in churches and schools: I hate wars, armies, soldiers, guns and fireworks.

I like music (~~limited~~).

I have been a great theatre-goer.

I enjoy the society of doctors and clergymen.

My favorite color is red.

I do not care particularly for sculpture or for paintings; I try not to become interested in them, for the reason that if I were to cultivate a taste for them I should presently become hopelessly bankrupt.

I am extravagantly fond of perfumes.

I am a poor diner, and I drink no wine, or spirits of any kind: I do not smoke tobacco.

I dislike crowds and I abominate functions.

I am six feet in height, am of spare build, weigh 160 pounds and have shocking taste in dress.

But I like to have well-dressed people about me.

My eyes are blue, my complexion pale, my face is shaven, and I incline to baldness.

It is only when I look and see how young and fair and sweet my wife is that I have a good opinion of myself.

I am fond of companionship of women, and I have no unconquerable prejudice against feminine beauty. I recall with pride

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that in twenty-two years of active journalism I have always written in reverential praise of womankind.

I favor early marriage.

I do not love all children.

I have tried to analyze my feelings toward children, and I think I discover that I love them, in so far as I can make pets of them.

I believe that, if I live, I shall do my best literary work when I am a grandfather.

Such is the famous *Auto-Analysis*, in which fact and fiction are so cunningly commingled that Field's closest friends have been unable to distinguish them. All they know is that he intended it to be exactly what it is—a snare to the credulous, and to the critical an amusing illustration of the art of harmless equivocation. Beyond the recital of well-known facts, scarcely half a dozen other statements can be taken without some reservation. Even the enumeration of his publications cannot be accepted as accurate. It omits mention altogether of Francis Wilson's sumptuous edition of *Echoes from the Sabine Farm*, scant justice to which is done in a preceding chapter. McClurg's edition was not printed until two years after the beautiful limited edition. A special large paper edition of the *Second Book of Verse* was published privately by Melville E. Stone a year before the Scribner edition of 1893.

The humor of the *Auto-Analysis* really begins when it gives what purports to be an analysis of his nature, sentiments and recreations. His "My favorite flower is the carnation and I adore dolls" is a droll mixture of misinformation and irrelevance. Field was not especially fond of flowers, but if he had a favorite, it was the rose, the pansy or the violet. But why drag in dolls?

Of his three favorites in fiction *Don Quixote* was the only one to which he paid the tribute of a second reading. He had undoubtedly read *Pilgrim's Progress* under the kindly eye of Miss French, but Bunyan's great allegory was not one of the sources from which he drew inspiration. It

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was in the pages of the *New England Primer*, *The Compleat Angler* and *Father Prout's Reliques* that he found rest, recreation and stimulation. To an individual inquirer he once said: "My favorite authors of prose are Cervantes, Hawthorne, Anderson and Sir Thomas Mallory," a much more likely choice. Reverse English needs to be applied to "Bounding Billows" as his favorite hymn, as also to the laconic "I do not smoke tobacco." The camera that caught Field with a cigar in his mouth, like the apparatus in "Kit, the Arkansas Traveler" did not lie, but it might have been suspected of lying had it shown him without the tell-tale cheroot.

Why Field wrote, "I like music (limited)" is not open to reasonable explanation. He not only liked music, but he went far beyond liking—he loved music. He had an attentive and acutely sensitive ear to the harmony of sweet sounds. He would run to the window to listen to a hurdy-gurdy or sit enthralled at the opera or classic concert. Before me lies proof of his taste in music. Written on the back of a sheet of foolscap paper, which, on its face, preserves the original manuscript of "A Noon Tide Hymn," are three suggestions for the "request" programs which Theodore Thomas used to give in the old Exposition Building in Chicago. Field was a constant attendant at these concerts and always made a point of sending in his choice for the next "request" night. Here are the three suggestions:

- | | | |
|---|-----------------------------|-------------|
| 1 | Invitation to Dance..... | Weber |
| 2 | Spring Song..... | Mendelssohn |
| 3 | Largo | Handel |
| 4 | Rhapsody Hongroise (2)..... | Liszt |
| | | |
| 1 | Vorspiel | Lohengrin |
| 2 | Waltz Movement | Volkman |
| 3 | Serenade | Schubert |
| 4 | Ride of Walküres | |

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- | | | |
|---|-----------------|-------------|
| 1 | Sylvia | |
| 2 | ? | |
| 3 | Ave Maria | Bach-Gounod |
| 4 | Introd. | } |
| | Nap. | |
| | March | |

The "Noon Tide Hymn" on the back of which these proofs of Field's taste in music were written bears date of July 18, 1886. One stanza of the hymn, the second to the last, will give an idea of its flavor:

*It is the solemn noontide hour
When grateful nature everywhere
Acknowledges the heavenly pow'r
In one still, universal pray'r.*

The only limitation to Field's liking for music was that it should be good music. In those days Mr. Thomas seldom made up a request program without including in it one of Field's favorites.

That Field once seriously contemplated writing a light opera is proved by the facsimile of its scenario on the next pages. He went so far as to give the titles of the lyrics he proposed to write for it but never did so far as I could find out. Field always suspected that the descriptive title of his leading characters furnished the title for an opera that was successfully produced about that time.

"I am a poor diner and I drink no wine or spirits of any kind," wrote Field in his *Auto-Analysis* in 1894. This from the best diner-out of his time is a worthy companion declaration to his repudiation of using tobacco. His wretched digestion limited his enjoyment of the temptations of the table but left him free to keep the ball of story and wit spinning without stopping for refreshments. Such a thing as a dull dinner party where Field was a guest was impossible. He did not drink wine or spirits because, like Rip Van Winkle, he had sworn off; but, unlike Rip, he kept

The Buccaneers.

Fernando, the Begum - bass.
Pagrita, his daughter - soprano.
Christopher, the buccaner - baritone.
Mercedes, his sister - contralto.
Carlos, a Peruvian lieutenant. Tenor.
Gonzales Begum of Olivos
Buccaners, maidens, bellet, servants, &c.

Time of action - three days. 1860.

2nd act, in garden adjoining Fernando's mansion, suburbs of Pinar
del Rio, part of Pagfa.

First Act.

Fernando, the Begum, is about to give a midnight fete in honor of his daughter's betrothal to Carlos. Two
young people are not particularly surprised at the prospect of their union, Carlos having given his heart
some years previously to Mercedes who is now married to a Captain in the Chilean army, and Pagrita
having fallen desperately in love with a handsome young stranger whom she has upon several occasions
met upon the seashore. This stranger is Christopher, who for his participation in a petty revolt, has been

declared an outlaw and has taken to the life of a buccaner, joined by numerous lively companions. Overcome by love of Paquito, Christopher manages to get himself and his band introduced into the forts and in the midst of the festivities, the young women are seized and carried aboard the buccaners' ships.

Second Act.

Carlos, who has been taken prisoner with his girls, discovers that Mercedes, the buccaner captain's sister, is his old friend and is now a widow; explanations ensue and a reconciliation takes place. While he is talking love they shall advise Paquito of the truth, they overhear a conversation between Christopher and Paquito. Paquito declares that if Christopher really loves her he will suffer her to return to her father and will even and now her as an honorable man should. Christopher is about to release the captives, when Mercedes suggests that, to insure the safety of the buccaners, Carlos be retained as a hostage. Carlos indorses the suggestion. The young ladies are permitted to go ashore.

Third Act.

While Fernando storms over the retention of Carlos, Paquito only broods over his love for Christopher. As the soldiers at her window, Christopher appears. He cannot remain away from the object of his love. A reconciliation between the two. In the meantime Carlos and Mercedes have secretly stolen from the ship and been married by the village priest. They appear while Paquito and Christopher are conversing. Quaintly. Fernando hears the conversation. (Quaintly), Christopher is discovered and apprehended. The buccaners appear to rescue their long absent captain. Fernando informs the buccaners that under the amnesty act of the King, they are no longer outlaws. Christopher's captives await him. Carlos and Mercedes appear. Fernando gives Paquito

Christopher -

~~He~~

"THE BUCCANERS," FIELD'S PROPOSED OPERA

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sworn off; and for the sufficient reason that his physicians in Denver had warned him that if he would live his allotted span he must give up all descriptions of alcoholic beverages.

But, like all victims of dyspepsia, the pains and pangs of indigestion possessed for him a perennial fascination. Why Tom, Dick or Harry's meat should be poison to Eugene Field was a conundrum he was never weary proposing to his medical friends, who were never able to satisfy his inquiring mind. He was born with sufficient assimilative organs for his brains but they were unequal to the task of providing the sound body that would insure the consummation of the wish behind the last paragraph of his *Auto-Analysis*—the songs and tales of a grandfather.

It would be interesting to trace through the immense volume of his newspaper activity the references to diet, dyspepsia and the art of living. Conviviality as it pertained to the pleasure of agreeable company around a well-laden board was a part of that love of companionship which survived the wrench of parting with Bacchus and John Barley-corn. In Volume I *Sharps and Flats* (Scribner's, 1900) may be found a whole chapter entitled, "Of Diet and Dyspepsia," which consists of several extended articles relating thereto. They treat of "Hash," "Ye Plainte of a Dyspeptic" and "Ye English Mince Pie." But on that relating to "How Job Suffered from Dyspepsia" Field lavished the wealth of his experience plus his fancy. After claiming that dyspepsia is the "oldest malady known to mankind," he opens the discussion thus:

The oldest piece of literature—and perhaps the oldest poem ever written—treats of the career of a dyspeptic, his physical and mental symptoms, his curious hallucinations, his reformatory life, his gradual restoration to health, his subsequent prosperity, and his wondrous longevity. We refer to the Book of Job, to the reading, nay, to the study of which we urge those who are aware that they have stomachs and those, also, who are likely to become so aware.

Instead of quoting further from this most admirable

Apple-Pie and Cheese.



Full many a sinful nation
Conceived of foreign powers
Has come across the ocean

To harm this land of ours;
And heretics called fanatics
Have modestly effaced,
And baleful, morbid passions
Corrupt our native taste.

O tempora! O mores!
What profanations these
That seek to dim the glories
Of apple-pie and cheese!

I'm glad my education
Enables me to stand

Against the vile temptation

Heed out on every hand;
Eschewing all the tittles
With vanity replete,
I'm loyal to the victuals

Our granderies used to eat!
I'm glad I've got three willing boys
To hang around and tease
Their mother for the filling joys
Of apple pie and cheese.

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mingling of the dyspeptic woes and tribulations of Job and Eugene Field, which are fully set forth in the volume named, the reader may find some compensation in the following examples of how Field made copy of the stomachic woes of his friend Billy Florence:

"It's all well enough for people to tell me I am looking younger than ever," said William J. Florence yesterday, "but I'm not to be fooled with that kind of flattery. I am getting along in years—yes, I'm a spring chicken no longer."

"That's the way Billy talks now-a-days," said Mr. Joseph Jefferson, "yet he is two years younger than I am."

"And you're no spring chicken, either," retorted Mr. Florence. "No, we've got to make up our minds, Joe, that decrepit age is stealing upon us. It isn't the pleasantest food for reflection, but it becomes a man who has lived three-score years."

"The first intimation I had that I was no longer young," continued Mr. Florence, "was last summer when I made an excursion up the Thames with a select party of London clubmen. Lord Charles Fitzlush and Sir Allan Geoffrey Gosh induced me to go—in fact a lot of the Garrick Club boys got after me, and well, what could I do or say? Of course I had to go along. The day after we returned—or, rather, the day after we were brought back from that boat ride—Sir Allan came around to see me at Morley's. I was still abed; I contemplated staying there forever; I felt, oh, indescribably wretched. But Sir Allan was as brisk as a lark. As he entered the room he stopped."

"'Excuse me,' said he, 'I thought this was Mr. Florence's room. I beg your pardon.'"

"'Beg your pardon, but have I ever met you before?' asked Sir Allan."

"He was not joking; he was in dead earnest."

"What ailed him, I wondered."

"'Aha, good joke,' said I, trying to be merry in spite of the Omaha flavor in my mouth and a high-altitude pressure in my head; 'Aha, good joke; but come now, I say, old fellow, let's be serious!'"

"'It is you, after all, isn't it?' exclaimed Sir Allan. "'Pon me honor, I'd never have known you but for your voice. You've changed so beastly much, old man, don't you know.'"

"'Egad, have I?' says I; and for a fact I felt changed. Had never had these Omaha and high-altitude symptoms before. Crawled

out of bed, tottered over to the mirror and looked at myself, then pinched myself to see if I was dreaming.

"Send for a doctor," says I, crawling back into bed and pulling the clothes up over my head. Sir Morrill Mackenzie came. 'Sir Dock,' says I, 'What ails me? I never was so before I went boating on the Thames with those Garrick Club boys.' I showed him photographs of myself taken only a fortnight before; he sounded my lungs, listened to my heart, looked at my tongue, felt my pulse and tested my breath with medicated papers.

"As near as I can get at it," said he at last, 'you are a victim of misplaced confidence. You have been training with young bucks when you should have been ploughing around with the old stags. You must quit it. Otherwise it will do you up.'

"Well now that was the saddest day of my life; just think of shutting down on the boys after being one of them for sixty years! But Sir Morrill told the truth. The Garrick Club boys were terribly mad about it; they said Sir Morrill was a quack and they adopted resolutions declaring a lack of confidence in his professional skill. But my mind was made up. 'Billy,' says I to myself, 'you must let up. You've made a record; it is a long one and an honorable one. Now you must retire. Your life henceforth shall be reminiscent and its declining years shall be hallowed by the refulgent rays of retrospection.' To that resolution I have adhered steadily. People tell me I am as young as ever, but, no, they cannot fool me. I know better."

"Just to illustrate the folly of all that talk," said Mr. Jefferson, "I'll tell you what I saw last night. When I returned to the hotel after the play I went up to Billy's room and found Billy and the President of the Philadelphia Catnip Club at supper. What do you suppose they had? Stewed terrapin and frapped champagne."

"That's all right," exclaimed Mr. Florence. "Terrapin and champagne never hurt anybody; I have had 'em all my life. What I maintain is that people of my age should not and cannot indulge in extravagant diet. The utmost simplicity must be the rule of their life. If Joe would only eat terrapin and drink champagne, he wouldn't be grunting around with dyspepsia all the time."

There is a certain reminiscent flavor of the coincidence of the epicurean experience of Field at thirty and of Florence in the sixties that lends point to this discussion between Sir Lucius O'Trigger and Bob Acres, or Bardwell Stote and Rip Van Winkle, as they were better known.

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What other American author, himself denied the delights of the "gustatory nerves," ever sang of them with richer gusto than Field in

THE FISHERMAN'S FEAST

*Of all the gracious gifts of Spring
Is there another can surpass
This delicate voluptuous thing
This dapple-green plump-shouldered bass?
Upon a damask napkin laid,
What exhalations superfine
Our gustatory nerves pervade
Provoking quenchless thirst for wine.*

*The ancients loved this noble fish,
And coming from the kitchen fire
All piping hot upon a dish,
What raptures did he not inspire?
"Fish should swim twice," they used to say;
Once in their native vapid brine
And then again a better way—
You understand, fetch on the wine!*

*Ah, dainty monarch of the flood,
How often have I cast for you,
How often sadly seen you sulk
Where weeds and pussywillows grow!
How often have you filched my bait,
How often snapped my treacherous line.
Yet here I have you on this plate
You shall swim twice—and now in wine!*

*And, harkee, garçon! let the blood
Of cobwebbed years be spilled for him—
As in a rich Burgundian flood
This piscatorial pride should swim;
So, were he living he should say
He gladly dies for me and mine,
And as it were his native spray,
He'd lash the sauce—what ho! the wine!*

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*I would it were ordained for me
To share your fate, O finny friend!
I surely were not loath to be
Reserved for such a noble end;
For when old Chronos, gaunt and grim,
At last reels in his ruthless line;
What were my ecstasy to swim
In wine, in wine, in glorious wine!*

*Well, here's a health to you, sweet Spring!
And prithee, whilst I stick to earth,
Come hither every year and bring
The boons provocative to mirth.
And should your stock of bass run low
However much I might repine
I think I might survive the blow
If plied with wine, and still more wine!*

If Eugene Field had lived to these prohibition days, as a man he might have voted for a point fifty per cent alcoholic beverage, but as a poet of the Falernian school he would have sung the praises of Horace's favorite wine "and still more wine." His favorite autographed gift books were those that related to the art of cooking. One of these, Hazlitt's *Old Cooking Book*, lies before me inscribed to Mrs. Thompson in his familiar script:

*Big bokes with nony love I send
To those by whom I set no store—
But see I give to you, sweete friend,
A lyttel boke and love gallore!*

E. F.

But the issue of a souvenir cookbook by the lady managers of the World's Fair at Chicago in 1893 gave Field a unique opening for a discourse on his favorite tantalizing topic. It was labelled "In Praise of Cooks," and was printed in his column May 15, to this effect:

He must be a very ungrateful creature who really feels that "the devil sends cooks." The responsibility for that vicious say-

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ing is borne by no man in particular. Ages ago some critical dyspeptic, a bachelor undoubtedly, gave expression to that untruth and there being other bachelor dyspeptics in the world, the wretched libel became a so-called proverb, and it is still hurled at the lover of those delicious viands which only the artistic cook—heaven bless him or her—can devise and concoct.

"Cookery," quoth old Bob Burton, and he was the most learned of men, "cookery is become an art, a noble science; cooks are gentlemen." This was said some three hundred years ago and times have changed to the degree that we are now able to amend old Burton's proposition in such wise that the gentlemen, as the saying goes, shall embrace the ladies.

Mrs. Percy L. Shuman of this city has just published a volume of her own compilation—a book entitled, "Favorite Dishes: A Columbian Autograph Souvenir Cookery Book." The compilation is of receipts contributed by the lady managers of the World's Fair, each recipe bearing the autographic signature of the contributor; there are more than three hundred of these recipes, not unfrequently the same subject being treated in several different ways by as many different contributors.

The object of this publication is, as Mrs. Shuman says, to furnish the wherewithal to women who would not otherwise find means sufficient to pay the expense of a trip to the World's Fair. It is proposed to place this book in the hands of these women and let them profit by the sale thereof. The scheme is a very noble and praiseworthy one, and we are sure that it will be of great benefit to a numerous and worthy class of our people.

Of the contents of the book we feel moved to speak at some length, for the reason that we feel deeply interested in all that concerns the cuisine, and for the reason, furthermore, that a somewhat extended career as a practical amateur cook qualifies the writer to discuss these matters intelligently.

"Favorite Dishes" treats of twenty-six departments of cookery. "Cakes" is the most popular theme, as we discovered in the forty-seven recipes submitted. Next comes "puddings," with thirty-five recipes while for "pies" only twenty recipes are given, and of this number four are for lemon pie, and none for squash, rhubarb, potato, cranberry, peach or huckleberry—a most singular and shocking neglect! The "cookery" department presents nine recipes, and dognuts and fritters come in for thirteen. Among the distinguished contributors of the dognut department is Miss Frances E. Willard, who prefaces her recipe with the

FIELD'S AUTO-ANALYSIS

ingenuous statement that she never knew anything about cooking and never had a particle of taste for it. "It is hard," says this admirable lady, "to give a recipe where so much depends upon the judgment and care of the cook. Much depends upon having the grease in which the dognuts are fried very hot before they are put in, otherwise they soak up the fat and are heavy."

We regret not to find in this volume an analysis or a recipe for the construction of that kind of dognut which abounds in our Chicago restaurants and which has in its very center—in *cordis ipsis*—an insoluble, irrefragible and indigestible pellet of rubescent composition.

In spite of her disastrous career as a restaurateur, Mrs. Matilda B. Carse cheerfully offers her advice as to the roasting of beef; she wisely says that the oven should be neither too hot nor too cold, and that, when at the proper temperature and the cooking is going on all right, the meat will keep up a gentle sputtering in the pan.

Another recipe which Mrs. Carse volunteers is for the manufacture of "pineapple sponge," which is served with a carefully prepared lather compounded of whipped cream, powdered sugar and vanilla extract.

Mrs. Potter Palmer contributes but one recipe and that is for a punch Romaine; it is not necessary to give the recipe here, as it occurs in Mrs. Palmer's words in other cookery books which we have read. Punch Romaine is a very refreshing viand and it is justly popular in the households of that class of our population where the agents of this volume will achieve the largest sales.

Mrs. James A. Mulligan's Welsh rarebit dispenses with ale, butter and cream; it is therefore not so sure of fatality as a Welsh rarebit ought to be, and we cannot indorse it. Mrs. A. M. Palmer's recipe for codfish balls neglects to mention the important detail that the balls should be well surfaced with dry flour in order to brown well.

As for the waffles of which Mrs. Mary B. P. Black tells, they must be delicious! What edible is there so grateful as a light, crisp waffle to a refined, discriminating palate? And Mrs. Black's waffles are, we are sure, facile princeps. We intend to experiment with Mrs. Palmer's recipe for sweet pickled peaches, for sweet pickled peaches are a luxury that appeals to us with singular directness and force. Quite frequently we meet with edibles bearing the name of sweet pickled peaches, but they do

LIFE OF EUGENE FIELD

not deserve it, for in too many instances the so-called sweet pickled peach is an imposture, in fact we long ago came to the conclusion that it required nothing short of a genius to pickle a peach as that noble fruit should be pickled. And at this moment—'tis the thousandth time of late—comes the balmy, refreshing recollection of happier days when fate more kindlier disposed than now put us very often in the way of the most delicious pickled peaches, or perhaps it should be said put those most delicious pickled peaches in our way to our corporal comprehension and spiritual edification. In all confidence we will say that we verily believe that the original apples which tempted dear old Mother Eve in Eden were the ancestors of those pickled peaches!

But—for we must not dwell on harrowing details—there is very much in this book before us that is of interest and value. We have recipes of every kind—for Sally Lun, bachelor's pone, amber soup, tartar sauce, bisque of crawfish, jambolaya, deviled lobster, clam fritters, Mexican enchiladas, piccalilli, plum pudding, pecan cake, Hamburg cream, sand tarts, maraschino ice-cream, fudges, eggnog, shrimp à la Newburg, and hundreds of other frivolous things that contribute to make life worth living. We are rather sorry not to find any reference to corned beef, which we understand is an edible that finds favor with our best society here in Cook County. A recipe for the preparation of this would seem to be desired, for we are told that not long ago a bride in this city sought to surprise her husband by preparing him a dinner of corned beef and cabbage, of which she knew he was very fond. It is related that when the husband tasted of the dish he paused ominously and asked his wife whether she had not adulterated it in the cooking.

"Yes, Charlie," she answered guilelessly, "the corn beef and cabbage smelled so while it was cooking that I dropped in a bunch of tube roses to flavor it."

We recall to have read somewhere not long ago the remark of an experienced and sagacious woman to the effect that a truly efficient housekeeper ought to be able to go into the kitchen and cook at a woman's notice, even though attired in her silks and satins. Mrs. Shuman's book is adorned with portraits of many of the beautiful women who contribute to its contents. From a survey of these portraits we gather the suspicion that these ladies make a practice of cooking in décolleté toilets. Our observation has been by no means limited, yet we are wondering how a lady clad in a décolleté dress could find it practicable to do effective

FIELD'S AUTO-ANALYSIS

service where hot fat was frying and steam abounded in profusion. How, amid the environments of a kitchen, does she manipulate the train that pends to her gown? As a seeker after and an investigator into truth, it is proper that we should be enlightened upon the important, if delicate, points inevitably suggested by ornate portraits of the beautiful women in this notable volume.

Did ever another so revel in the joys he must not taste—a Tantalus with wine rising to his parched lips he could not drink, and fruit hanging above his head he could not reach, and yet his merry heart carried on and he could troll:

*For envious bitter rancor croons
Where human politics is rife,
And from a humble mess of prunes
May rise a hurricane of strife.*

The two concluding paragraphs but one of the *Auto-Analysis* were doubtless penned by Field to provoke the incredulity with which they were received. And yet the "I do not love all children" are the most truthful six words of the *Analysis*. Field truly loved very few children, except as he could study their childish ways and unrestrained emotions. He delighted to watch their little telltale faces respond to his stories of fairies, werewolves, flub-dubs and bug-a-boos. Beyond the natural affection for his own, he spoke the truth when he said that he only loved children in so far as he could make pets of them. And out of that petting came some of his most perfect songs of childhood in our language. He knew children and through them their mothers beyond any other poet of our day. If he had loved them more perhaps he would have understood them less.

CHAPTER XV

OUR PERSONAL RELATIONS AND PERSONAL POEMS

NOW in the process of developing the plate whereon is depicted the real Eugene Field as he merrily walked the earth, it is fitting that I should use our personal relations as a lay figure on which to demonstrate what manner of man he was to those with whom he chose to be intimate. Through the preceding pages the reader has had occasional glimpses of the close connection in which we were thrown. From the day I joined the *Daily News* staff in September, 1883, until his death we were fast friends. During the first five years we were inseparable. It was a case of the attraction of opposites—a joining of contrasts through which the strongest friendships are cemented. The daily intimacy lasted until I resigned from the *Morning News* to join in the founding of *America*—a literary and political periodical which had a brief but merry life. Field celebrated and recognized the change that came over our relations in 1887 when I married, by presenting to Mrs. Thompson as a wedding gift two volumes of his poems in his wonderful script embellished with numerous sketches done in every color of the rainbow and dedicated as “Ye Piteous Complaynt of a Forsookken Habbit; a Proper Sonet,” which the reader will find in the introductory pages hereto. It may be of interest to the reader to learn that with characteristic thrift the condition upon which he made this now priceless present was that I should buy the letter-sized blank books wherein he was to write his best verse to that date. This he did faithfully and with infinite pains. On one page it contains

PERSONAL RELATIONS AND POEMS

a pencil sketch of Modjeska as Mary Stuart by herself and on the flyleaf of one of the volumes outline sketches of Field by himself and by Mme. Modjeska. The two books to-day are probably the most valuable bits of Fieldiana in existence. In one of the volumes in an appendix Field started to give the genesis of the more important of



Mary Stuart
drawn by Modjeska Chlebowska

SKETCH OF MODJESKA BY HERSELF

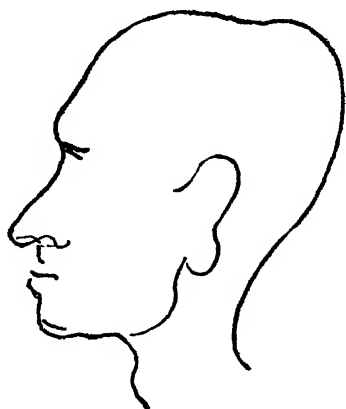
his verses, but gave it up after five entries, covering "The Wanderer," "The Little Peach"—which he characterizes as "popular, but rotten," "The Editor's Wife," read before the Chicago Press Club, January, 1884, "The Christmas Treasures" and "The Vision of the Holy Grail," attributed to Judge Thomas M. Cooley.

After my marriage Field was a frequent visitor at our home on Superior Street, which was centrally located, on his way home from the office; but it was not so convenient

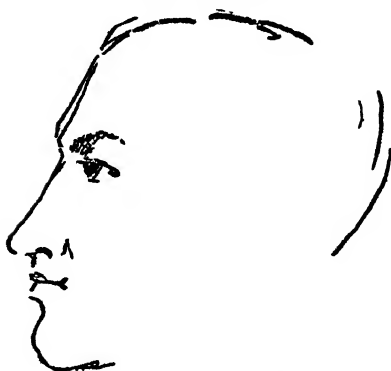
LIFE OF EUGENE FIELD

for his unconventional visits as my bachelor quarters in the Sherman House or the Pullman Apartments had been.

Turning to our association in those bachelor days, some inkling of how hourly intimate it was has been given in the



PROFILE OF FIELD BY HIMSELF



PROFILE OF FIELD BY MODJESKA

telling of this story. No matter how busy or engrossed I was, I was liable to interruption by the irrepressible spoiled favorite of the *News* office. It came in personal visits and constant bombardments of messages such as those already printed. He could not go out to lunch but I must go along. In the days before I had given hostages to fortune, he was

PERSONAL RELATIONS AND POEMS

as much interested as I was in impressing Mr. Stone that an advance in my wages would be welcomed as contributory to his own enjoyment of Henrici's apple pie and coffee. If

Appendix. X

Note "A": These verses appeared originally in the *Denver Tribune*, credited to Helena Modjeska. They were copied far and wide over Modjeska's name. Modjeska took the joke in pretty good part. The original publication was June, '83.

Note "B": Originally printed in the *Kansas City Times*. Recited publicly by Henry E. Husey, John A. MacRay, Sol Smith Russell and almost every comedian in America. Popular but rotten.

Note "C": Read at the annual banquet of the Chicago Press club, January, 1884.

Note "D": The first piece of serious verse I ever wrote; it was printed in the *St. Louis Morning Journal*, Dec. 25, 1878. I regard it as one of my best pieces of work.

Note "E": Credited to Judge Thomas M. Cooley in an essay on his literary works and style, *Chicago Daily News*, Feb., '87. This is unquestionably the best bit of literary work I have done up to this time.

APPENDIX WRITTEN BY FIELD IN A VOLUME OF HIS VERSE
PRESENTED TO MRS. THOMPSON

we could get Stone to go along, it was "on the office." How Field "worked the office," and that there was nothing derogatory to either worker or worked in the proceeding, is very

The Editor's Wife *

x

No eloquent thought and no flowery word
That the most of you, list'ning enraptured, have heard,
Could allure me from raiads so temptingly spread
That I've missed the extempore speeches you've read;
But my heart beats responsive to one theme divine —
The Woman we drink to in bumpers of wine;
So I throw down my napkin my fork and my knife
To speak to the toast of "The Editor's Wife."

And of course you'll agree, since our wives are all here
To brighten the scene and partake of our cheer,
That the best of all angels whom heaven hath sent
To bring a man sympathy, peace and content,
To add to his joys and to lessen his woes,
To sew on his buttons and patch up his hose,
And to smooth out the wrinkles and the wrinkles of life —
Is the angel we worship, the editor's wife.

When the editor comes from the office at night
At a very late hour, in a dubious light,
His impression prevails and the story is told
That the editor's wife can be always sojled
With a fib about "bridge" or "a broken down peer" —
But we who have been here are free to confess
That, when husbands are late and suspicions are rife,
It is best to own up to the editor's wife.

*Appendix "C."

PERSONAL RELATIONS AND POEMS

cleverly illustrated in the following verses to Collins Shackelford, the cashier of the *Morning News*:

A SONNET TO SHEKELSFORD

*Sweet Shekelsford, the week is near its end,
And, as my custom is, I come to thee;
There is no other who has pelf to lend—
At least no pelf to lend to hapless me.
Nay, gentle Shekelsford, turn not away—
I must have wealth, for this is Saturday.*

*Ah, now thou smil'st a soft relenting smile—
Thy previous frown was but a passing joke.
I knew thy heart would melt with pity while
Thou heardst me pleading I was very broke.
Nay, ask me not if I've a note from Stone,
When I approach thee, O thou best of men!
I bring no notes, but, boldly and alone,
I woo sweet hope and strike thee for a ten.*

Dec. 3, 1884

In the first version the third line in the second stanza, for the "Sonnet" was divided as above, ran thus:

A noble pity swept thy heartstrings while

and the last two lines ran:

*Friendless and needy, boldly and alone
I baffle fate and strike thee for a ten.*

There were other minor verbal changes, all going to show that in the preparation of this particular strike Field took particular pains and the result is a touching classic of its kind. Mrs. Field missed a ten out of Field's "envelope" that week. For facsimile of original see next page.

Perhaps no better medium can be adopted to give the reader a clear conception of our intimate relations than to let Field give an outline of them through verses addressed to me at different times.

A Sonnet to Shekelsford.

Sweet Shekelsford, the week is near ^{its} end,
And as my custom is, I come to thee:
^{is}
~~For~~ there ^{is} no other who has self to lend -
Weast no self to lend to hapless me;
Nay, gentle Shekelsfords, turn not away -
I must have wealth, for this is Saturday.

Ah, now ~~show~~ ^{relenting} smile, a soft ~~and pitying~~ smile -
Thy previous frown was but a passing joke,
I knew thy heart would melt with pity, while
~~Amble pity we for thy heart's sake~~
Thou heardest ^{me} ~~my eternal~~ pleading I was ^{very} broke
Nay, ask me not ~~for~~ if I've a note from Stone,
When I approach thee, O thou best of men!
I bring no notes, but, badly and alone,
~~Friendless and needy, badly and alone,~~
^{woe reveal hope}
I baffle fate and strike thee for a few.

#

Dec. 3 1884.

A SONNET TO SHEKELSFORD

THE GOOD KNIGHT TO SIR SLOSSON

(Note: While this poem is printed in all the "Reliques of Ye Good Knight's Poetrie," and while the incident it narrates is thoroughly characteristic of that knightly sage, the versification is so different from that of the other ballads that there is little doubt that this fragment is spurious. Prof. Max Beeswanger (Book III, page 18, Old English Poetry) says that these verses were written by Friar Terence, a learned monk of the Good Knight's time.)

With this by way of introduction, Field proceeded with his poem.

*The night was warm as summer
And the wold was wet with dew,
And the moon rose fair
And the autumn air
From the flowery prairies blew;
You took my arm, ol' Nomp,
And measured the lonely street
And you said, "Let's walk
In the gloam and talk.
'Tis too pleasant tonight to eat!"*

*And you quoth: "Old Field, supposin'
Hereafter we two agree;
If it's fair when we're through,
I'm to walk with you;
If it's foul, you're to eat with me!"
Then I clasped your hand, ol' Nomp,
And I said: "Well, be it so."
The night was so fine
I didn't opine
It ever could rain or snow.*

*But the change came on next morning
When the fickle mercury fell,
And since that night
That was warm and bright,
It's snowed or it's rained like—well,
Have you drawn your wages, Nomp?*

LIFE OF EUGENE FIELD

*Have you reckoned your pounds and pence?
Harsh blows the wind,
And I feel inclined
To banquet at your expense.*

It may be noted that not only is the versification different from that in others of Field's ballads, but the first and sixth lines of each stanza do not rhyme with anything, nor is it intended that they should. The progress of this pact is seen in the next selection which, without any caption, proceeds:

*Discussing great and sumptuous cheer
At Boyle's one midnight dark and drear,
Two gentle warriors sate;
Out spake old Field: "In sooth, I reck
We bide too long this night on deck—
What, ho there, varlet, bring the check!
Egad, it groweth late!"*

*Then out spake Thompson, flaming hot;
"Now, by my faith, I fancy not,
Old Field, this ribald jest;
Though you are wondrous fair and free
With riches that accrue to thee
The check tonight shall come to me—
You are my honored guest!"*

*But with a dark forbidding frown
Field slowly pulled his visor down
And rose to go his way—
"Since this sweet favor is denied,
I'll feast no more with thee," he cried—
Then strode he through the portal wide
While Thompson paused to pay.*

When this was written the riches that accrued to each of us was the lordly sum of \$50 per week, and it was upon a suggestion of Field's "that it would be safe for you to hit him (Stone) on the salary question as soon as you

Relly.

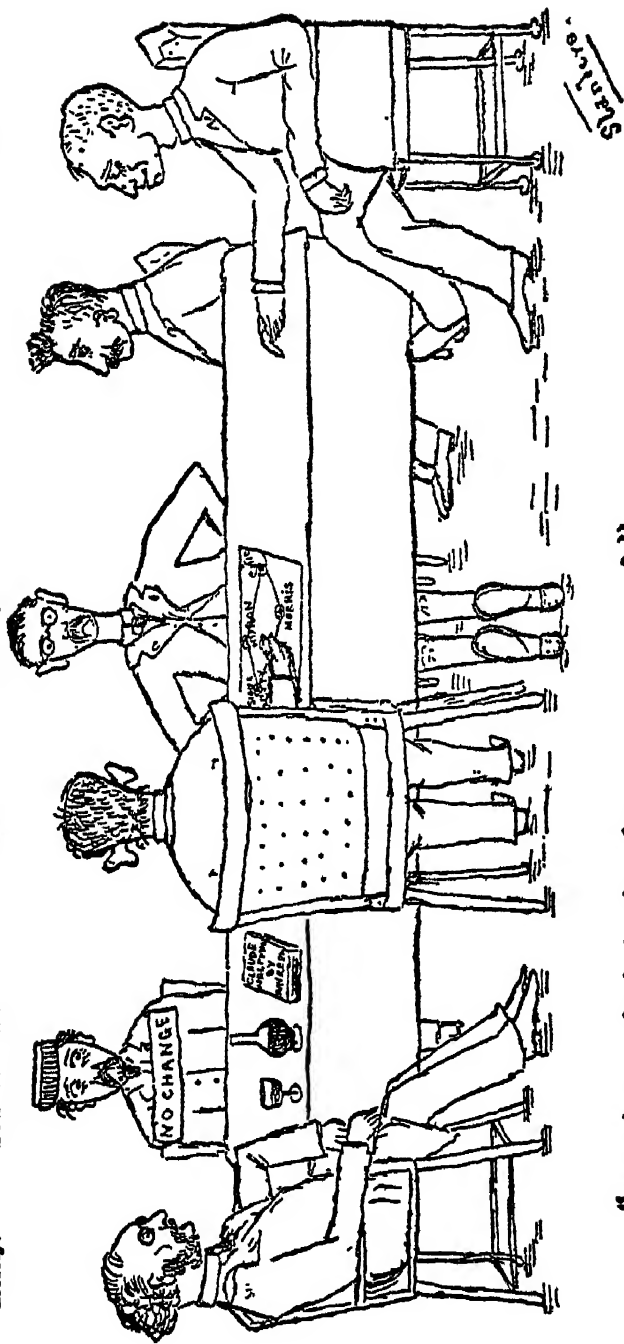
Shackelford.

Stone.

Ballantyne.

Thompson.

Field.



"Now, boys, which point shall we move on?"

"DAILY NEWS" EDITORIAL COUNCIL OF WAR

From a drawing by Eugene Field

LIFE OF EUGENE FIELD

please" that I acted so as to give an air of verisimilitude to the story told in Mr. Stone's *Fifty Years*, discussing our daily editorial conferences:

One day [says Mr. Stone] Slason Thompson said he was entitled to an increase of salary.

"And why?" I asked.

"Because," he replied, "I am the only man in the editorial conference who is always ready to say that you do not know what you are talking about."

I got the raise, and Mr. Stone very handsomely acknowledges that as he looked back through the years he thought Thompson's judgment was quite often better than his own. Happily for the *News*, Mr. Stone held the rudder. In the daily council sketch, drawn in Field's best manner, the reader may see what an editorial conference looks like.

The next poem in this knightly series was written in my absence from Chicago, and is entitled:

HOW THE GOOD KNIGHT PROTECTED SIR SLOSSON'S CREDIT

*One midnight hour, Sir Ballantyne
Addressed old Field: "Good comrade mine,
The times, i' faith, are drear;
Since you have not a sou to spend,
I would to God our generous friend
Sir Slosson now were here!*

*Then spake the impecunious knight,
Regardful of his piteous plight:
"Odds bobs, you say the truth;
For since our friend has gone away,
It doth devolve on thee to pay
Else would I starve, i' sooth."*

*Emerging from their lofty lair
This much bereaved but worthy pair
Proceeded unto Boyle's,
Agreed that buttered toast would do
Although they were accustomed to
The choicest roasts and broils.*

PERSONAL RELATIONS AND POEMS

*"Hey dey, sir knights," a varlet cried,
'Twas Charlie, famous far and wide
As Boyle's devoted squire.)
"Sir Slosson telegraphs me to
Deliver straightway unto you
Whatever you desire."*

*The knights with radiant features saw
The message dated Mackinaw,
Then ordered sumptuous cheer;
Two dollars worth, at least, they cheered,
While from his counter Charlie leered
An instigating leer.*

*I wot poor Charlie did not dream
The telegram was but a scheme
To mulct Sir Slosson's pelf;
For in the absence of his friend
The honest knight made bold to send
That telegram himself.*

*Oh, honest Field! to keep aright
The credit of an absent knight—
And undefiled his name!
Upon such service for thy friends—
Such knightly courtesies, depends
Thy everlasting fame!*

Four days after this poem was dated I received the following note on a postal card:

FRIEND THOMPSON: Field and Ballantyne gave me the telegram tonight ordering one supper. But they have been eating all the week at your expense. Is it all right?

Yours, CHAS. BURKEY.

The handwriting was disguised but there was no mistaking the "instigating leer" behind the postal. And so it went. Returning from the East escorting a young lady to whom I told some of Field's whimsies, she was moved with becoming pity for the good knight's plight and entrusted me with a silver piece—quarter, half or dollar, which, I now forget—to be given to him. This brought forth the following:

Then, when her faithful squire shall bring
~~To him who sent~~
~~Back unto me~~ this signet ring -

Invoking aid of me,
So, by ^{my father's} right side! with this good sword
Nix I despise the base base hordes
And set the famines free!

And yet, Sir Thompson, if I send
This signet to my Unknown friend,

I jeopardize my life;
For this fair signet which you see,
Odds bobs, doth not belong to me
But to my ~~old~~ wife! - *Brawny*

I should not risk as sweet a thing
As my salvation for a ring,
And all thro' jealous spite!
Hate to the fair Unknown and say
You lost the ring upon the way -
Come, then, ~~to speed the~~ courteous Knight!"

Evening he spoke, the Good Knight drew
His visor down, and, ^{waving} ~~reluctant~~ to
Sir Thompson fond farewell,
He left upon his courser fleet
And crossed the drawbridge to the street
Which ~~then~~ was called La Selle.

#

Oct. 19th, 1885-

THE GOOD KNIGHT AND THE FAIR UNKNOWN (continued)

LIFE OF EUGENE FIELD

How far Eugene Field carried these conceits and the infinite pains he bestowed on their expression is exemplified in the following verse touchingly illustrated by our friend Sclanders. It was neatly enclosed in an imposing envelope and delivered to me in the midst of a dinner party at a friend's home on Ontario Street. On the cover sheet was beautifully engrossed and underlined in red the following title page:

~ # ~

How the Good Knight Attended upon Sir Slosson.

~ . 1 . ~

Being a Woful Tale

of

Those Most Joyous and Swiŕting Days

wherein

Knight Erant his Courteously Desport Themselves

and Achieve Prodigies of Valor.

and

Marvels of Sweet Friendship.

~ . 1 . ~

The most joyous tale was told on three pages of the "Chicago Daily News Editorial Rooms" water-marked

PERSONAL RELATIONS AND POEMS

Crane & Company note paper, and was executed by Field in his most exquisite script in different colored inks, and this is the fanciful story it told:

#

How the Good Knight Attended upon Sir Slossow.

One chilly, raw November night,
Beneath a dull electric light
At half past ten o'clock,
The Good Knight, wan and hungry, stood
And, in a half expectant mood,
Peered up and down the block.

The smell of viands floated by
The Good Knight from a basement nigh
And tantalized his soul
Keenly his charlie, knightly nose
Envied the fragrance that arose
From many a steaming bowl.

Pining for steaks not brewed for him
The Good Knight stood there, gaunt and grim —
The paragon of wue;
And muttered in a chiding tone,
"Odds bobs! Sir Slossow must have known
'I was going to rain or snow!'"

But, while the Good and Honest Knight
Flocked by himself in sorry plight,
Sir Slosson did regale
Himself within a castle grand —
Forgetful of the Good Knight and
His wonted stoups of ale.

Mid joyous Knights and ladies fair,
He little recked the evening air
Blew bitterly without;
Heedless of pelting storms that came
To breach his friend's dyspeptic frame,
He joined the merry rout,



But underneath the corner light
 Lingered the impetuous knight —
 Wet, hungry and alone —
 Hoping that from Sir Blosson some
 Encouragement perhaps would come
 Or from the Fair Unknown.

November 26th, 1885. #

Drawing by Selanders of Field waiting outside the Boston Oyster House accompanying the facsimile of "How the Good Knight Attended upon Sir Blosson"

LIFE OF EUGENE FIELD

Four weeks pass. The scene changes and the meter with it. 'Tis the eve before Christmas and we have done our season's shopping. We part in the lobby of the old Sherman House, Field to take a North Clark Street car while I take the last elevator to my single room castle on the sixth floor and am soon in bed and sound asleep—how long I do not know, only to be awakened by a commotion and tittering in the corridor outside the door. Then comes a knocking. Opening the door, a large old-fashioned woolen stocking, suspended to a fork stuck in the door, hits me in the face. Attached to this I find a sheet of foolscap whereon is writ, in that well-known hand:

HOW SANTA CLAUS CAME TO SIR SLOSSON

*I prithee, gentle traveller, pause
And view the work of Santa Claus.
Behold this sock that's brimming o'er
With good things near our Slason's door;
Before he went to bed last night
He paddled out in robe of white,
And hung this sock upon the wall
Prepared for Santa Claus's call.
And said, "Come, Santa Claus, and bring
Some truck to fill this empty thing."
Then back he went and locked the door,
And soon was lost in dream and snore.
The Saint arrived at half-past one—
Behold how well his work is done;
See what a wealth of food and toy
He brought unto the sleeping boy;
An apple, fig and orange, too,
A jumping-jack of carmine hue,
A book, some candy, and a cat,
Two athletes in a wrestling spat,
A nervous monkey on a stick,
And honey cake that's hard and thick.
Oh, what a wealth of joy is here
To thrill the soul of Slason dear!*

PERSONAL RELATIONS AND POEMS

*Touch not a thing, but leave them all
Within this sock upon the wall;
So when he wakes and comes, he may
Find all these toys and trinkets gay,
And thank old Santa that he came
Up all these stairs with all this game.*

Everything mentioned in these verses and more too was crammed into that sock that hung on the door, not on the wall, of Room 651. Whether Field got more pleasure from concocting his plan and hunting up the old ribbed sock and the toys and the honey cake "hard and thick," with bleached almonds stuck in its sticky surface or in the night-clerk's tale of how I had been routed out by the early wayfarer before the light of Christmas broke upon slumbering Chicago, I never knew.

Another change of scene. I am spending a vacation at Mackinac Island and am bombarded with letters by every mail addressed after this fashion:

For

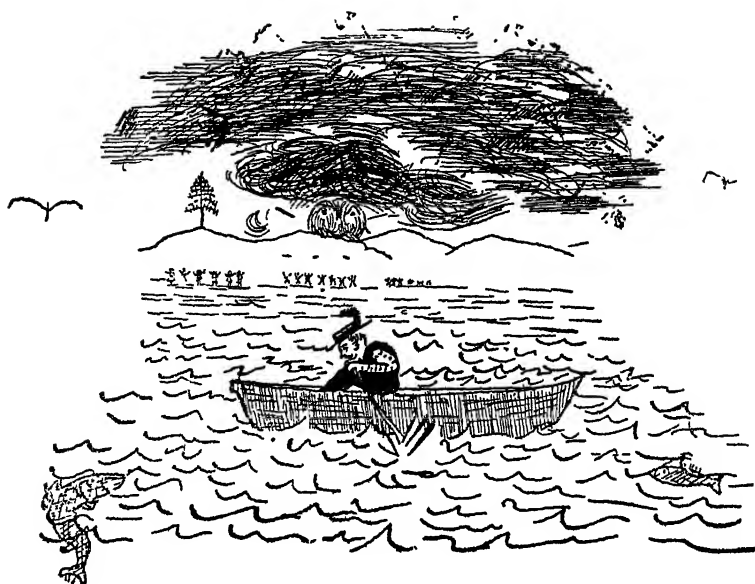
The Valorous, Joyous, Triumphant and Glorious Knight
The Ever Gentle and Courteous Flower of Chivalry
Cream of Knight-Errantry, and Pole Star of
Manly Virtues

SIR SLOSSON THOMPSON

who doth for the nonce sojourn at
Mackinac Island,
Mich.

where, under the guise of a Lone Fisherman,
he is regaled with sumptuous cheer and divers
rejoicings wherein he doth right merrily disport.

Although the address in black ink stood out like a black hulk in a sea of carmine, the canny author took the precaution to write "E. Field" in the *Daily News* return card on the corner of the envelope. But the postmaster dropped the rest of the mail for the Island resorters in order to see that Sir Slosson got his. Having furnished me with the



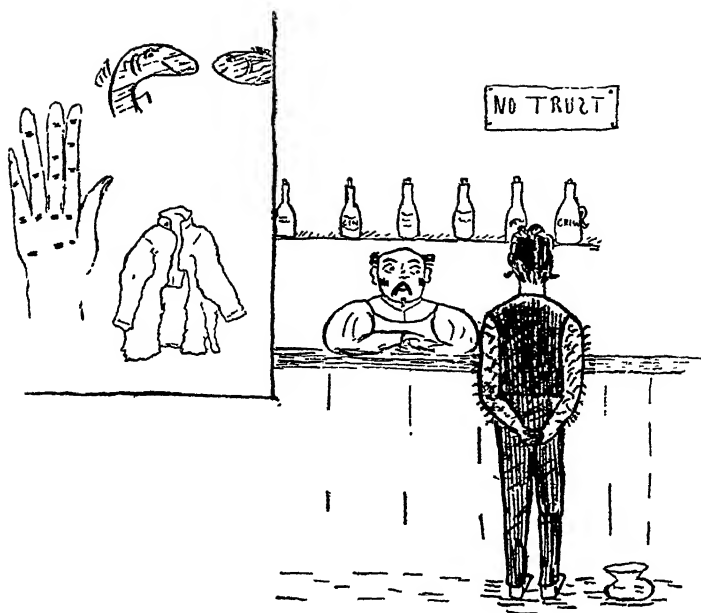
I.

A Thompson went rowing out into the strait —
 Out into the strait in the early morn;
 His step was light and his brow elate
 And his shirt was as new as the day just born.

His brow was cool and his breath was free
 And his hands were soft as a lady's hands,
 And a song of the bounding waves sang he.
 As he launched his bark from the golden sands,

The grayling chuckled a hoarse "ha-ha."
 And the eels tittered a rude "he-he" —
 But the Thompson merrily sang "tra-la"
 As his bark bounced over the northern sea.

AN ECHO FROM MACKINAC ISLAND



II.

& Thompson came bubbling back into the bay —
 Back into the bay as the sun sank low,
 And the people knew there was hell to pay —
 For he was n't the first who had come back so.

His nose was skinned and his spine was sore
 And the blisters speckled his hands so white —
 He had lost his hat and had dropped an oar
 And his brown shirt was a sad sea sight.

Then the graying chuckled again "ha-ha"
 And the eyes glittered a harsh "ho-ho" —
 But the Thompson anchored farthest a bar
 And called for a schooner to crown his woe.

August 30 1885

#

AN ECHO FROM MACKINAC ISLAND (continued)

LIFE OF EUGENE FIELD

"guise of a Lone Fisherman," Field proceeded to elaborate the idea in facsimile as above and as follows in text for convenient reading:

AN ECHO FROM MACKINAC ISLAND

*A Thompson went rowing out into the strait—
Out into the strait in the early morn;
His step was light and his brow elate,
And his shirt was as new as the day just born.*

*His brow was cool and his breath was free,
And his hands were soft as a lady's hands,
And a song of the booming waves sang he
As he launched his bark from the golden sands.*

*The grayling chuckled a hoarse "ha-ha"
And the cisco tittered a rude "he-he"—
But the Thompson merrily sang "tra-la"
As his bark bounced over the Northern Sea.*

.
*A Thompson came bobbing back into the bay—
Back into the bay as the sun sank low,
And the people knew there was hell to pay,
For HE wasn't the first to come back so.*

*His nose was skinned and his spine was sore
And the blisters speckled his hands so white—
He had lost his hat and dropped 'an oar,
And his bosom-shirt was a sad sea sight.*

*And the grayling chuckled again "ha-ha,"
And the cisco tittered a harsh "ho-ho"—
But the Thompson anchored furninst a bar
And called for a schooner to drown his woe.*

PERSONAL RELATIONS AND POEMS

The two pictures accompanying this pleasantry were truly worthy of Field's eccentric genius with pen and colored inks. Even without the aid of color the drawing of the two scenes leaves little for the imagination to supply. The taunts of the grayling and cisco are almost audible.

Facsimiles, slightly reduced, of how this correspondence was addressed follow:

THE CHICAGO DAILY NEWS.

MORNING AND EVENING ISSUES.—7 EDITIONS DAILY.



To
The Good and Generous Knight,
Sir Svensen Thompson,
Now summing, and Rejoicing and
with Triumphant Cheer, at
Mackinac Island,
Michigan.

THE CHICAGO DAILY NEWS.

MORNING AND EVENING ISSUES.—7 EDITIONS DAILY.



For that Most Illustrious and Pious Knight
Sir Svensen Thompson,
Extrabale of Chicago, but now illumining
Mackinac Island,
Michigan,
where, under civic guise, he is accomplishing prodigious
slaughter among the fish that do inhabit that coast.

One more "echo" from that memorable Mackinac correspondence must close this exhibit of what infinite pains Eugene Field took in his merry fooling with the friends of his choice, of whom I happened to be one. This particular "echo" had its background in the personal idiosyncrasies

LIFE OF EUGENE FIELD

of our friend Barbour Lathrop, one of the most irrepressible travelers and raconteurs that ever visited the out-of-the-way places of this earth and entertained his listeners from the Bohemian Club of San Francisco to lonely wastes of Beersheba. In the annals of that Club he is known as "the man with the iron jaw," in the archives of the United States at Washington he has been honored with the first medal ever awarded and struck for distinguished service, et cetera. Well, Mr. Lathrop and I were companions at Mackinac Island that summer, of which Field took note in the following poem, which is worthy a place in any collection of his verse:

THE GOOD SIR SLOSSON'S EPISODE WITH THE GARRULOUS SIR BARBOUR

*Sir Slosson and companions three
With hearts that reeked with careless glee—
Strode down the golden sand,
And pausing on the pebbly shore
They heard the sullen, solemn roar
Of surf on every hand.*

*The Lady Florence said, "I ween"—
"Nay, 'tis not half so grand a scene"
Sir Barbour quickly cried:
"As you may see in my fair state
Where swings the well greased golden gate
Above the foamy tide."*

*Sir Slosson quoth, "In very sooth"—
"Nay say not so, impetuous youth,"
Sir Barbour made his boast;
"This northern breeze will not compare
With that delicious perfumed air
Which broods upon our coast."*

*The Lady Helen fain would say
Her word, but in his restless way
Sir Barbour nipped that word;*

PERSONAL RELATIONS AND POEMS

*The other three were dumb perforce—
Except Sir Barbour's glib discourse
No human sound was heard.*

*And even that majestic roar
Of breakers on the northern shore
Sank to a murmur low;
The winds recoiled and cried "I sooth,
Until we heard this Frisco youth
We reckoned we could blow!"*

*Sir Slosson paled with pent up ire—
His eyes emitted fitful fire—
With rage his blood congealed;
Yet exercising sweet restraint,
He swore no vow and breathed no plaint—
But pined for Good Old Field.*

*The ladies, too, we dare to say,
(If they survived that fateful day)
Eschew all Frisco men
Who, as perchance you have inferred,
Won't let a person get a word
In edgewise now and then.*

How some of these verses came to be written at this particular stage of our companionship can best be told in Field's own words in a letter enclosing the episode with Sir Barbour, which also throws some light upon how the daily grind went on in the *News* office:

CHICAGO, July 19th, 1885.

SWEET KNIGHT:

Heedful of the promise I made to thee prior to thy setting out for the far distant province of Mackinac, I am minded to temporarily lay aside the accoutrements of war and the chase and pen thee this missive wherein I do discourse of all that happened since thy departure. Upon a Saturday I did lunch with that ill-tempered knight, Sir Plumbe, and in the evening did I discuss a goodly feast with Sir Cowen, than whom a more hospitable knight doth not exist—saving only and always thy-

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self, which art the paragon of courtesy. This day did I lunch at mine own expense, but in very sooth I had it charged, whereat did the damned Dutchman sorely lament. Would to God I were now assured at whose expense I shall lunch upon the morrow and the many days that must elapse ere thy coming hence. By this courier I send thee divers rhymes which may divert thee. Soothly they are most honest chronicles, albeit in all modesty I may not say they do not overpraise me. The good knight Melville crieth it from the battlements that he will go into a far country next week. Meanwhile the valorous Sir Ballantyne saweth wood but sayeth naught. The winsome he-handmaiden Birdie (Field's favorite name for our artist) quitteth our service a week hence; marry, I shall miss the wench. The fair lady Julia doth commend thy prudence in getting out of the way ere she reproached thee for seducing the good knight into that Milwaukee journey, of the responsibility of which naughtiness I have in very sooth washed my hands as clean as a lamb's liver. By what good fortune, too, hast thou escaped the heat and toils of this irksome weather. By my halidom, the valor trickleth down my knightly chin as I pen these lines and my shirt cleaveth to my back like a porous plaster. The good knight of the Talking Cat speaketh to me of taking his vacation in the middle of August, whereat I much grieve, having a mind to hie me away at that sweet season myself. One sumptuous feast have we already had at thy expense at Boyle's, as by the check thou shalt descry on thy return. Sir Harper did send me a large fish from Lake Okeboji today, which the same did I and my heirdom devour triumphantly this very evening. I have not beheld the Knight of the Lawn since thy departure. Make fair obeisance to the sweet ladies who are with thee and remember me with all courtesy to Sir Barbour, the good Knight of the Four Winds.

Kissing thy hand a thousand times, I sign myself

Thy loyal and sweet servant,

FIELD,

The Good and Honest Knight.

This letter is one of the, if not the most perfect specimens of Field's original manuscripts. It is written on a single sheet letter size, without a blemish, flaw or correction from beginning to end—in which respect it differs from

PERSONAL RELATIONS AND POEMS

the accompanying verses, which bear frequent marks of the artist's striving after fitting the right word to the rhythm of the line.

Field regarded postage on his correspondence much as Samuel Johnson did excise, which in his monumental dictionary he defined as "A hateful tax, levied upon commodities and adjudged, not by the common judges of property, but by wretches hired by those to whom excise is paid." So Field kept a strict account of every postage stamp on our correspondence and rendered bills for the same like unto this:

Mr. Ebenezer Thompson,
to Eugene Field. Dr.

To 4 stamps @ 2 cts -	July 20 -	.08
" 1 stamp	July 22 -	.02
	<i>Total</i>	<i>.10</i>

Please remit.

But on the other side of the ledger he would send me a most painstakingly written bit of verse for the loan of a single stamp, of which the following is a sample:

THE GOOD KNIGHT'S DIPLOMACY

*One evening in his normal plight
 The good but impecunious knight
 Addressing Thompson, said:
 "Methinks, a great increasing fame
 Shall add new glory to thy name
 And cluster round thy head.*

*There is no knight but he will yield
 Before thy valor in the field
 Or in exploits at arms;*

LIFE OF EUGENE FIELD

*And all admit the pleasing force
Of thy most eloquent discourse—
Such are thy social charms.*

*Alike to lord and vassal dear,
Thou dost incline a pitying ear
To fellowmen in pain.
And be he wounded, sick or broke,
No brother knight doth e'er invoke
Thy knightly aid in vain.*

*Such—such a gentle knight thou art
And it is solace to my heart
To have so fair a friend;
No better, sweeter boon I pray
Than thy affection—by the way,
Hast thou a stamp to lend?"*

*"Aye, marry 'tis my sweet delight
To succor such an honest knight!"
Sir Thompson straight replied.
Field caught the proffered treasure up,
Then tossing off a stirrup cup,
From out the castle hied.*

Between Field and me there never was such a thing as borrowing or lending of actual money. The only instance to the contrary that I can recall—is that recalled by him in the following note written at the time we were getting subscriptions for his two little books of *Western Verse* and *Profitable Tales*:

DEAR THOMPSON: Please credit on subscription to book J. B. McCullagh, Editor, Globe-Democrat, St. Louis, Mo...\$30.
I also hand you the sum borrowed to-day..... .50

\$30.50
FIELD.

The two-cent stamp has been with us so long as the bearer of first-class correspondence of the Republic, to say

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nothing of paying the freight on the millions of tons of advertising, that only the older generations remember that it was preceded by the three-cent stamp, to which Field paid the following parting tribute:

TO THE THREE-CENT STAMP

*Goodby, old stamp, it's sorry luck
That ends our friendship so;
When others failed you gamely stuck—
But now you've got to go.
So here's a flood of honest tears
And here's an honest sigh;
Goodby, old friend of many years,
Goodby, old stamp, goodby!*

*Your life has been a varied one
With curious phases fraught—
Sometimes a check, sometimes a dun
Your daily coming brought;
Smiles to a waiting lover's face,
Tears to a mother's eye,
Or joy or pain to every place,
Goodby, old stamp, goodby!*

*You bravely toiled, and better men
Will vouch for what I say—
You have been licked, but always when
Your face turned 'tother way;
'Twas often in a box you got
(As you will not deny)
For going through the mails, I wot—
Goodby, old stamp, goodby!*

*Ah, in your last expiring breath
The tale of years is heard;
The sound of voices hushed in death,
A mother's parting word,
A maiden's answer, soft and sweet,
A wife's regretful sigh,
The patter of a baby's feet—
Goodby, old stamp, goodby!*

LIFE OF EUGENE FIELD

*What wonder, then, that at this time
When you and I must part,
I should attempt to weave in rhyme
The promptings of my heart.
Go, bide with all those mem'ries dear
That live when others die—
You've nobly served your purpose here—
Goodby, old stamp, goodby!*

It is of interest to record that this farewell verse to the faithful servant of American millions was written in 1883. Belonging to this period, but clearly cousin to this series, is the following untitled verse:

*Oh, for the merry, blithesome times
Of bosky Sherwood long ago,
When Alan trolled his amorous rhymes
And Robin twanged his beechen bow;
When Little John and Friar Tuck
Traversed the greenwood far and near,
Feasting on many a royal buck
Washed down with brown October beer.*

*Beside their purling sylvan rills
What knew these yeomen, staunch and free,
Of envious cares and gruesome ills
That now, sweet friend, vex you and me.
Theirs but to roam the leafy glade,
Beshrewing sheriffs, lords and priests,
To loll supine beneath the shade,
Regaling monarchs with their feasts.*

*A murrain sieze these ribald times
When there is such a lust for gold
That poets fashion all their rhymes,
Like varlet tradefolk, to be sold!
Not so did Alan when he trolled
His ballads in that merry glade—
Nay, in those courteous days of old
The minstrel spurned the tricks of trade!*

PERSONAL RELATIONS AND POEMS

*So, joyous friend, when you and I
Sing to the world our chosen theme,
Let's do as do the birds that fly
Careless o'er woodland, wold and stream.
Sing Nature's song, untouched of art—
Sing of the forest, brook and plain,
And hearing it, each human heart
Will vibrate with the sweet refrain.*

And that was all the religion he had, and they that knew him not or sadly misinterpreted him have moved all that was mortal of Eugene Field from the grace land of the sylvan glade in which loving hands laid him to the cold close of a suburban church to which in life he was a stranger.

CHAPTER XVI

OUR PERSONAL RELATIONS—LETTERS AND NOTES

DURING our close association on the *Morning News* there was little occasion for correspondence between us beyond the fugitive notes wafted into my adjoining room by the grinning office boy, specimens of which have been given. Yet I had only to step off the newspaper reservation for a week-end to be followed by notes of all descriptions. In the fall of 1884 I was assigned to visit various places in the state of Maine to feel the pulse of Mr. Blaine's neighbors as to the effect of what was known as the Little Rock scandal in his home state. For ten days I roamed the state from Kittery Point to Skowhegan, making my headquarters at the Hotel North, Augusta. Here I became the center of curious gossip by reason of daily postal cards from the *News* office, the tenor of which can be judged from the only one saved from the importunity of autograph hunters.

CHICAGO, Oct. 10th, 1884.

If you do not hasten back we shall starve. Harry Powers has come to our rescue several times, but is beginning to weaken, and the outlook is very dreary. If you cannot come yourself, please send certified check.

Yours hungrily,
E. F.
J. F. B.

When I moved on to Boston in search of more Mulligan Letters, I was preceded and followed by more quasi-compromising postal cards that came near "queering" my still hunt. In the preceding pages the reader has had an inkling of the mixed pleasure of being a favored correspondent

LETTERS AND NOTES

of Eugene Field. You never knew when you would be embarrassed by an embarrassing postal card intended for the eye of postal officers all along the line. With his 404 Gillott pen Field could put two "stickfuls" on a postal card; but the letter that follows was deemed worthy of a half sheet of note paper and the two-cent stamp charged in the "Please remit" bill already given. It ran:

CHICAGO, July the 22d, 1885

DEAR SIR KNIGHT,

I have been too busy to reply to your many kind letters before this. On receipt of your telegram [the one he wrote himself] last night, we went to Boyle's and had sumptuous cheer at your expense. Charlie has begun to demur and intends to write you a letter. Brown [Francis, McClurg's reader] wrote me a note the other day. I enclose it to you. Please keep it for me. [This referred to McClurg publishing a collection of his poems.] I hope your work [*The Humbler Poets*] will pan out more successfully. I had a long talk with Stone to-night and churned him up about the paper. He agreed with me in nearly all particulars. He is going to fire W—— when D—— goes [August 1]. He said, "I am going to have a lively shaking up at that time." One important change I am not at liberty to specify, but you will approve it. By the way, Stone spoke very highly of you and your work. It would be safe for you to hit him on the salary question as soon as you please. The weather is oppressively warm. Things run along just about so-so in the office. Hawkins tells me he woke up the other night and could not go to sleep again till he had sung a song. The Dutch girls at Henrici's inquire daily for you. I tell them you are *ausgespielt*. John Howson [the comedian] calls occasionally and makes life a burden to me.

Hastily yours,
EUGENE FIELD

Albeit there are one or two touches of the rare old Knight in this epistle, it is about as commonplace a letter as he ever wrote me. Mark the contrast with the next, selected from a bunch of notes mailed to me daily at Lake Forest, Ill., where I was spending Christmas week.

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Soothly, sweet sir, by thy hegira am I brought into sore distress and grievous discomfiture; for not only doth that austere man, Sir Melville, make me to perform prodigies of literary prowess but all the other knights do laugh me to scorn and entreat me shamelessly when I be ahungred and do importune them for pelf whereby I may compass victuals. Aye, marry, by my faith, I swear 't, it hath gone ill with me since you strode from my castle in the direction of the province wherein doth dwell Sir Walter, the knight of the Tennis and Toboggan. I beseech thee to hie presently unto me, or at least to send hence siller or gold wherewith I may procure cheer—else will it go hard with me, mayhap I may die, in which event I do hereby nominate and constitute thee executor of my estates, and I do call upon the saints in heaven to witness this solemn instrument.

Verily, good sir, I do grievously miss thee and I do pine for thy joyous discourse and triumphant cheer, nor by my blade, shall I be content until once more thou art come to keep me company. Touching that varlet knight Sir Frank de Dock, I have nought to say, save and excepting only that he be a caitiff and base born dotard that did deride me and steal away unto his castle this very night when I did supplicate him to regale me with goodly viands around the board of that noble host Sir Wralsy of Murdough [manager of the Boston Oyster House]. I would to high heaven a murrain would seize the hearts of all such craven caitiffs who hath not in them the sweet courtesy and generous hospitality that doth so well become thee, O glorious and ever to be mulcted Sir Knight of the well-stored wallet. I do beseech thee to have a care to spread abroad in the province wherein thou dost sojourn fair report of my gentleness and valor. Commend me to the glorious and triumphant ladies and privily advise them to send me hence guerdons of gold or siller if happily they are tormented by base enchanterers, cruel dragons, vile hippogriffes or other untoward monsters, and I do swear to redress their wrongs when those guerdons be come unto me. For it doth delight me beyond all else to avenge foul insults heaped upon princesses and lorn maidens. If so be thou dost behold that incomparable pearl of female beauty and virtue, the Fair Unknown, prithee kiss her jewelled hand for me and by thy invincible blade renew my allegiance unto her sweet cause. Methinks her sunny locks and azure orbs do haunt my dreams, and anon I hear her silvery tones

LETTERS AND NOTES

supplicating me to accept another *arms*. And I do lustily beshrew fate that these be but dreams.

Now in very sooth I do pray ye may speedily come unto me. Or if you abide in that far-off place [28 miles], heaven grant thee prosperity and happiness such as surely cannot befall the Good Knight till thou dost uplift his arms again.

I do supplicate thee to make obeisance unto all in my name and to send hither tidings of thy well-being. How goeth the jousts and tourneys with the toboggan and hath the cyclonic Sir Barbour wrought much havoc with his perennial rhetoric in the midst of thee? I do kiss thy hand and subscribe myself

Thy sweet and sorry slave,

Dec. 27, 1885

EUGENE FIELD

It took the Good Knight almost a letter page of his finest script to beshrew the base enchanter who bewitched him into writing "arms" in the foregoing where he did mean "alms," as was apparent from the context. He also informed me that "The incomparable Sir Melville hath all the good knights writing editorials this eve, from the hoary and senile Dock down to the knavish squire that sweeps out the castle."

In 1886 Field signalized our comradeship by a series of daily letters beginning on September 10th and ending on the 28th, which ran the whole gamut of Fieldiana—frolic, fun and dead earnest. The occasion for this outburst was my spending my annual vacation with my family in Fredericton, New Brunswick. The fact that I was a Canadian by birth was always a subject of great interest and keen raillery to Field, of which more anon. This series of letters opened with that giving an illustrated description of the baseball game the day I left Chicago, given in a preceding chapter, ending with the drawing of "Nompny tossing in 'Upper 10' and struggling for fresh air."

No. 2, written in gamboge ink on the 12th told of the infinite pains Field had taken to make a nightmare of Robert and Elia Peattie's bridal tour in Denver. His com-

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ment on the effect of his letters of introduction—"The dear boy will have a lovely time, methinks"—did not call for a second thought.

In No. 3, written on the 14th, Field enumerates with glee the wedding presents he had bought that day for Miss Gussie Comstock, his sister-in-law, about to be married to John F. Ballantyne, to wit: "2 quires of paper with envelopes, 1 curling iron, 2 papers of pins, 2 papers of hairpins, 1 darning ball, 2 combs, 1 bottle Calder's tooth powder, 1 bottle of vaseline, 1 bottle of shoe polish, 1 box of lip salve, 1 buttonhook and 1 bottle of listerine." He should have added a *New England Primer* and a copy of Watts' hymns.

No. 4, dated September 15th, presented me with the original of the accompanying cut, after the following introduction:

MY DEAR NOMPY: Presumably you are by this time sitting by the sad sea waves in that dreary Kanuck watering place, drawing sight drafts on the banks of Newfoundland and letting the chill East wind blow through your whiskers. We, too, are demoralized. That senile old substitute of yours—the Dock—has been as growly-powly as a bear today. As for me, I am growing desperate. You can see by the enclosed picture how changed I am.

"As I would have looked, but for this



defining appearance of old Nompny.

LETTERS AND NOTES

Stone has bought Gussie a salad set for a wedding gift. I suggested it in the hope that with two sets on hand Gussie might be disposed to give us the old one.

In No. 5, September 16th, Field quit badinage long enough to interject: "I have been reading the memoirs of Dolly Madison and am specially delighted with the letter written by the Quakeress Mrs. Hobbs. It is a beautiful letter, and you must read it at your first opportunity."

No. 6, September 18th, announced succinctly, "This, sweet lad, is the dullest Saturday that has befallen me in many a year."

No. 7, September 19th, recalls "how that man Reilly played upon the Good Knight the most shameful trick" he had ever heard tell of. He took him out to supper, professing to have only eighty cents. "He ordered twenty cents' worth and made me scrimp along on sixty cents," says the incensed chronicler, continuing, "When he came to pay the check he produced a five-dollar bill! I never felt so humiliated in all my life. I pine for the return of the sweet friend who seeks not by guile to set limit to my appetite."

No. 8, written on September 20th, was one of those multicolored letters in which Field occasionally delighted his eccentric soul. The first page was written in pale green ink, the second was in black, the third was in red and the fourth was a medley of these and purple, gamboge and mauve, making six colors for full measure. Of this kaleidoscopic display Field wrote:

I don't know what you think about it, but this business of writing with five different colors of ink is queering me at a terrible rate and I am sure that I would die of softening of the brain if I were to keep it up any length of time. But I presume to say that your skeptical little Bessie will think this the most beautiful page she ever saw.

LIFE OF EUGENE FIELD

Little Bessie was my niece, who was entirely captivated by Field's tales but didn't believe a word of them. He had come by this time to regard himself "as one of the family."

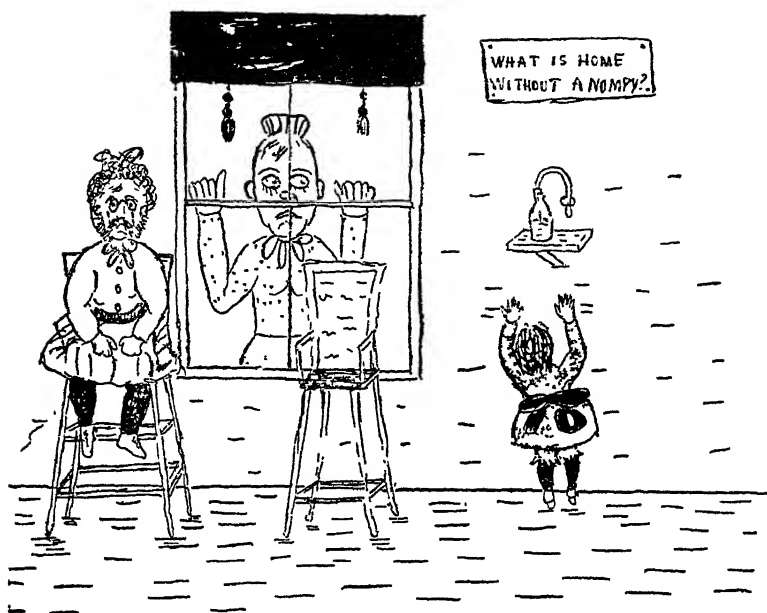
No. 9, written September 21st, gives a serio-comic description of the tribulations that formerly attended the life of the working staff of a daily newspaper.

Getting back to the office [writes Field, after a parenthesis during which he had awaited the non-arrival of Mrs. Field from St. Louis sitting "around on the trucks and things like a colossal male statue of Patience"] Getting back to the office I find that Dock has had a de'il of a time. He had to wait this evening to get some data from Y—— for a political editorial. Y—— did not show up until half-past eight; after he had disgorged the necessary information, he left the Dock cocked and primed for quick work. But the Dock had no sooner got fairly started—in fact had scarcely reached his first politico-medical phrase—when in came Roche (fresh from his bridal tour through Colorado) with a thunder-gust of tedious experiences. The Dock bore the infliction with Christian fortitude and thanked God when Roche left. In a moment or two thereafter, however, a Kansas City friend of mine called—very drunk, and not finding me, insisted on discussing me, my work and my prospects, with the Dock. John Thatcher dropped in subsequently, and so the Dock had quite a matinee of it. By the time I got back to the office the old gentleman was as vaporish as a hysterical old woman, and he vented his spleen on my unoffending head. God knows what a trial that man is to me. Yet I try to be respectful and kind to him, for age is entitled to that much tribute at least from youth. Since penning these lines I have read them to the Dock and it would do your soul good to see him squirm.

This last sentence explains Field's purpose in elaborating on the "Dock's" trials, which were a perpetual source of "ghoulish glee" to their instigator.

No. 10, written on September 22d, is chiefly noteworthy for a drawing by Field purporting to give a scene in the *Daily News* office and a list of the books he was devouring at that time.

LETTERS AND NOTES



A SCENE IN THE "DAILY NEWS" OFFICE

From a drawing by Eugene Field.

The letter commenting on this ran along:

It represents a scene in this office. I have stepped out to post a letter to you. Coming back I peep in at the window and behold baby Dock in his high chair weeping lustily, whilst baby Cowen has crept out of his chair, toddled to the wall and is reaching for his *bottle*! Betwixt the hysterics of the one babe and the bottle of t'other I am well-nigh exhausted. Come back and take care of your babies yourself.

His reading at that time is thus enumerated:

In the meantime I am sawing wood. I am reading a great deal. Read Mrs. Gordon's *Life of Christopher North*, parts of Burns's poems, *Life of Dr. Faustus*, and *Morte d'Arthur* since you left, and hope to read *Life of Bunyan*, *Homer's Works*, *Sartor Resartus* and *Rasselas* before you get back. I have about made up my mind to do little outside writing for four or five months and do a prodigious amount of reading instead.

LIFE OF EUGENE FIELD

The books mentioned are sufficient evidence of how really backward Field was in browsing among the classics of the English language, original and translated. This letter concluded with a characteristic touch:

Shackelford is off on his vacation, but I do not complain, since I find Rogers, his substitute, a pleasant gentleman to do Saturday business with. At last accounts, Lawson was wandering up and down the Rhine looking like a prosperous boot and shoe clerk.

In passing it may be remarked that up to the time and until Mr. Stone severed his connection with the *Daily News*, Mr. Lawson was only known to the staff of the morning edition as the shrewd business partner, who devoted his time to building up the circulation and advertising (notably want ads) of the *Evening News*, which then and always paid the freight for both. He sat on the safety valve of expenses, while Mr. Stone made the paper hum. Throughout his life Mr. Lawson took too few excursions up the Rhine or elsewhere, or he might be living to-day. He died under the burden of combined editorial supervision and every detail of publication.

No. 11 of September 26th:

DEAR BOY: . . . I have been with Kate Field all the evening and we have discussed everything from literature down to Sir Charles Dilke and back again. A mighty smart woman is Kate. My wife returned from St. Louis last Thursday, bringing about fifty of my books with her. They were mostly of the Bohn Library series, but among them was a set of Boswell's Johnson, Routledge edition of 1859. I want you to have an edition of this kind and have sent to New York to see if it can be had (cheap). . . .

Stone is thinking of having the three of us—Dock, you and your habit—write a department for the *Saturday News* after the fashion of the *Noctes*. . . . What are you going to bring me for a present? What I need is a "Noctes" and any other book you may get hold of in New York.

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He got the "Noctes," but nothing ever came of Mr. Stone's proposal.

No. 12 and last of this series, dated September 28th was addressed to me at New York and enclosed a letter of introduction to his and since then my friend, Mr. E. P. Mitchell, Mr. Dana's right-hand man on the *New York Sun*. My call was in connection with what purported to be a metrical translation of a newly discovered lyric by Goethe, pronounced in Chicago, according to Field, to rhyme with teeth. The imposition imposed on *Literary Life*, which shortly thereafter passed into the limbo for which it had been headed from the start.

On my return our daily intimacy was resumed, during those strenuous years when the *Morning News*, through the personal activity and unerring detective sense of Mr. Stone was so largely instrumental in bringing the Haymarket anarchists to the gallows and the nest of Cook County boodlers to Joliet. Field took little part in this phase of the paper's activities, but how he was willing to lend a hand is shown in the following forged contract:

I agree to set him up in great shape tonight to E.

*Field, his heirs and assigns forever, if he ever lobby,
through an article entitled "An Apology to Commissioner
Lynn"*

Witness my hand and seal.



S. Thompson

The doughty commissioner had threatened a libel suit unless a retraction of some reflections on his official actions was forthcoming, and the editorial that enlisted Field's

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support was one of those Janus-faced apologies that under the garb of retraction left the original offense unactionable but rankling. Mr. Stone would have rejoiced to pass it, but the cautious Scot refused his O. K. Field got the "set up" just the same.

Our nightly walks and talks continued until my marriage in the spring of 1887 and our daily associations and luncheons were not interrupted until I was tempted to join in the foundation of the independent weekly *America*. Field's contribution to that quixotic enterprise was his most famous poem, "Little Boy Blue," to the original copy of which, with his consent, I made the emendation of the four words, "What has become of" in the last line but one. That emendation in my handwriting has served well to protect the original from all the script copies Field was importuned to make. It is those four words that assure to Mr. John McCormack the possession of the original "Little Boy Blue" manuscript which he purchased for \$2400 at the Allied Fair in Chicago in 1916. The poem was first published April 7, 1888, bearing the legend "Written for *America*." Mr. Stone and Mr. Lawson dissolved their partnership on May 16, 1888, and the latter fell heir to the responsibilities and reputation that went with Field's nationally known column of "Sharps and Flats" in the *Morning News*.

In the days when Field and I worked almost literally cheek by jowl, the unwritten law and etiquette of impersonal journalism protected me from the jokes and sallies that he perpetrated on our friends indiscriminately. But from the day he ceased to await my coming, he proceeded to have all the fun at my expense that friendship permitted. The bars were down for all sorts of absurdity he proceeded to pin on me with his irrepressible 404 Gillott pen. For seven years as editor and publisher of *America* and as editorial manager of the "Old Reliable" *Chicago Evening Journal*, I made almost continuous running copy for Field



Little Boy Blue.

The little boy is covered with dust
But sturdy and staunch he stands,
And the little boy soldier is red with rust
And his musket mounds in his hands.
There was when the little boy toy was new
And the soldier was so young and fair,
And that was the time when our Little Boy Blue
Kissed them and put them there.

"Now don't you go 'til I come," he said,
"And don't you make any noise!"

So, toddling off to his tumbler bed,He dreamt of the pretty toys.

And as sleep was dreaming, an angel song
Awakened our Little Boy Blue —

Oh, the years are many — the years are long —
That the little boy friends are true!

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in his "Sharps and Flats." It was all intended to be friendly and I never made the mistake some of his friends did of taking offense at any sally he made at my expense. One hint of that and Eugene would have shut up like a clam, as he did when one of the *Tribune* staff indicated to Mr. Lawson that some of Field's humorous gibes were really annoying its veteran editor, for whom he entertained genuine respect and admiration.

Favorite themes for mock discussion by Field, so far as I was concerned, were my Canadian birth, my mugwump affiliations, my unsympathetic attitude toward the Browning fad, which he shared, and my fondness for all athletic games. Picking specimens of these at random and premising that they are merely given to illustrate the liberties he took with the names of his best friends, the following will serve as well as any:

July 31, 1889. The St. Johns (N. B.) *True Britisher* contains the somewhat interesting information that Slason Thompson, editor of our own *America*, "is still a citizen of and a legal voter in the provinces, his name not having been withdrawn from the queen's registry." Commenting upon this Mr. Ford's *Irish World* intimates that Mr. Thompson is "a British spy and that his operations are conducted upon the nefarious basis of sordid British gold."

July 18, 1892. Evanston. July 13. To the Editor: There is no possibility of a combination between the mugwump party of Chicago and the Woman's Christian Temperance Union of Evanston so long as the mugwumps retain for their agent here that irreverent man Slason Thompson. There still rankles deep in the bosom of us all the recollection that four years ago Thompson was heard to declare upon the streets of Evanston that Robert Browning's alleged poetry was mud. Such declaration, such profanation had never before been dreamed of. Many of the members of our Browning Society took to their beds and were ill for a week in consequence of this brutal attack upon that immortal singer whose recondite philosophy and abstruse qualities and delicate subtleties are so very, very precious to us. No, we can never forgive Thompson, nor shall we compromise upon any

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basis with the mugwump party so long as Thompson serves as their officially accredited agent.

Yours,

FELICIA H. BANGS-BIGGS

Sept. 7, 1892. The mugwump party is out of Chicago just at present. General McClurg has gone to Newport, General Ela is still perched on the tidal wave of reform, Slason Thompson is doing the Old Dominion and M. E. Stone is busy with cholera morbus at Coon Lodge, Glencoe.

July 1, 1893. This is to be the Canadian day at the World's Fair. One prominent Canadian we know of is the Honorable Alexandre Slason Thompson, editor of the *Chicago Evening Journal*; and as he has studiously queered himself with all the aliens we fear that he will not be invited to give to the Canadian high jinks at Jackson Park those elaborate touches essential to the symmetrization and concinnation of this occasion.

In the fall of 1894, through the mischievous complicity of Horace Fletcher, of "Fletcherization" fame, with whom I had been associated in the Olympic Club in San Francisco, Field had come into possession of my photograph in the scanty costume of the running track. This afforded Eugene the peg on which to hang one of his elaborate fabrications. For six consecutive days he laid the train for the exposure. As usual, his point of departure was a letter from his supposed correspondent in Evanston. Out of a clear sky the initial paragraph ran:

Sept. 13, 1894. Evanston. Sept. 11. To the Editor: The other evening while discussing with a party of friends the brightness and vigor of the editorial page of the *Evening Journal*, one of the gentlemen remarked that the excellences of that editorial page were due wholly to the physical vigor and intellectual alertness of the editor, Mr. Slason Thompson. He added that Mr. Thompson owed his physical and mental condition to the fact that for a considerable period in the earlier part of his life he was a professional athlete. I did not deny this for I did not know the facts. I am aware that Mr. Medill (Joseph, the editor of the *Tribune*) was in youth an athlete of remarkable prowess;

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that he was particularly skilful in the manly art of self-defense. I remember, too, having heard that Mr. Scott of the *Herald* used to be quite a sportsman, and that during his career in Virginia he was a famous shot. Mr. Nixon (William Penn) and Mr. Ballard of the *Inter Ocean* are known far and wide as expert and enthusiastic fishermen and Mr. Barron of the same paper is considered a skilful boxer. The advantage to be derived from athletics are numerous and generally recognized; they are particularly apparent in such cases where regular physical exercise is combined with regular intellectual labor. I am curious to know whether we are indebted to this salubrious combination for the vigorous and sparkling career of the editor of the *Evening Journal*.

Sincerely yours, THEODORE F. WINGATE

On this Field comments:

Mr. Thompson was never a professional athlete. He has always been the advocate of athletic sports, and he may have indulged in them—in fact, we are certain that he is somewhat proficient at skittles and at lawn tennis. Mr. Thompson is quite a pedestrian; his cure for a cold is rather novel—a hearty supper of beefsteak and onions and a pint of pale ale, a brisk walk of five miles and then immediately to bed. We have no doubt that his robust physique, conserved by abundant outdoor exercise, has contributed to his professional work much of that freshness and vigor that our correspondent very properly admires and commends.

Thus was the train laid for the farrago of fictitious correspondence that follows:

Chicago. Sept. 13. To the Editor: You appear to have been misinformed touching the antecedents of Mr. Slason Thompson, the able editor of the *Evening Journal*. I am quite positive that that gentleman was at one time a professional athlete and in that capacity he lowered the sprinting record for the fastest half mile and was awarded a gold medal for excellence at long pole vaulting. These prodigies were achieved while Mr. Thompson lived in San Francisco—say eighteen years ago—say twenty. Mr. Thompson is by birth a Canadian. As a youth he was singularly expert in the use of snowshoes and no other lad of his

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age in the Dominion was so successful as he in hunting the musquash, an amphibian rodent highly prized for its luxuriant fur. Sliding around over the snowdrifts and icebergs of Canada in pursuit of wild beasts undoubtedly laid the foundation of the vigorous constitution which now enables Mr. Thompson to pursue with his old-time enthusiasm and vigor the beasts of prey that infest the fields of American politics. His career as a sprinter and long-pole jumper in California simply confirmed and concinnated the robustness acquired in the wilds of New Brunswick.

Respectfully, J. S. W.

If other evidence were needed to the source of this letter, the correct use of the rare verb "concinnated," familiar only to Field in the *Daily News* office would supply it. Next day another letter in the series appeared:

Evanston. Sept. 13. To the Editor: You ought to be ashamed of yourself to print such yarns about the editor of the *Evening Journal*. He is an Evanstonian by adoption, and we are all very proud of him and we are indignant that you should give publication to rumors that represent him rather as a man of brawn than as a man of brain. Slason Thompson never was an athlete, professional or amateur. His life has been devoted to study and to the elucidation of those sociological and political problems which involve the welfare of humanity. Yet you would fain have us believe that his attention, time and energies have been devoted to dalliance with a long pole and exploits on the turf. As the immortal Browning once wrote, in answer to a venomous critic, but no; why quote Browning to one so incorrigible as you?

In the "Sharps and Flats" of September 17, 1894, under the subtitle of THE ENGROSSING TOPIC, Field proceeded to develop the plot.

Chicago. Sept. 14. To the Editor: I have read with great interest the letters appearing in your newspaper in which are discussed with much learning and fidelity to detail the causes which produced the vigorous constitution of Mr. Slason Thompson, the editor of the *Evening Journal*. I am minutely familiar with Mr. Thompson's life and am able to speak authoritatively on the subject. It is a great mistake to allow false impressions

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to be produced now concerning the way in which his vigorous constitution was acquired. It was not produced as one of your correspondents suggests, by sliding around on snowdrifts, but the foundation thereof was laid before he came from Canada. The pursuit of the muskquash unquestionably aided nature to a great extent and it was probably due to a magnificent physical development thus acquired that he afterward engaged successfully in combats with two-legged wild beasts. It is only justice to Mr. T. that your attention should be called to the errors of your correspondent.

Yours respectfully, R. L. C.

Chicago. Sept. 14. To the Editor: You say that when he was a boy the editor of the *Evening Journal* became quite an extended local celebrity as a hunter of mushquash. What is a muskquash? I say it is something to eat, and that, as its name indicates, it is squash reduced to the consistency of mush for cooking purposes. My brother, who is attending Chicago University, says it is a kind of cow and that its name is not mushquash but muskox. Which of us is correct?

Yours truly, A. L.

Field's comment:

The muskquash is the muskrat. It is an amphibious rodent acquiring the size of a cat and closely resembling the beaver in its habits. Its fur is of fairly good quality and its flesh is highly prized by Canadians. A perfume manufactured from certain glands found in the mushquash is in high favor with the élite of the Dominion.

From another point of attack comes the next letter:

Plano, Ill. Sept. 15. To the Editor: The information you have been publishing about the editor of the *Evening Journal* is simply another illustration of the cruelty of iconoclasm. Why is it that we so often are tremendously in error picturing to ourselves the portraits of those whom we revere but have never seen. If hero worship invariably ends in the rude destruction of the idol, were it not better that there should be no heroes? Or if we must have heroes, should not the iconoclast be discouraged? It is only a short time ago that I learned that there was never any

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such person as William Tell or as William Wallace; then I read that the story of the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus was a myth and that Joan of Arc so far from being the saintly heroine I always supposed her was a very coarse, mannish, unchaste wench. In your own paper about six weeks ago you printed arguments to prove that there was never any such man as Napoleon Bonaparte. My own life has been full of bitter iconoclastic experiences. Yes, from the sad day eight years ago when I discovered that Erastus Baker, recreant to his vows to me, had, while traveling through the country with Squire Nobles' thrashing machine, paid attention to the Turner girls, the Shoupe girls, the Hubbard girls, the McCracken girls and other girls too numerous to mention, and had got his tintype into every family album in the country—from that fateful day, I say, my life has been bitter with iconoclasm. But these latest developments of yours are the severest blow of all. A woman in my time of life is not hasty in rearing idols and in paying homage. I have taken the *Evening Journal* for the last seven years, the seven most conservative years of my life. It was not until three years ago that I discovered that its editor through the manly, serious wisdom of his editorial utterances had wrought his way into the very citadel of my heart; that unconsciously the tendrils of my virgin affection had reached up and twined themselves all around this idol hero. I pictured Mr. Thompson as a man of venerable appearance; somewhat above medium height, with a scholarly stoop of the shoulder, of an ascetic but benign countenance, with long white hair and a flowing white beard. This was my portrait of him, and you will understand how I venerated this ideal when I tell you candidly that for the past four years his editorial page in the *Evening Journal* has been as it were a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night unto my intellectual and spiritual nature.

My bound files of the *Evening Journal* (bound with lavender ribbons, for, if I do say it, I am charmingly complected) are dearer to me than my Kirke White's poems or the *Peterson's Magazines* that have been in our family for the last thirty years. But now another dream is ended and another illusion dispelled. For from your letters on the subject I gather, Mr. Editor, that so far from being the pale, scholarly being my maidenly fancy depicted, Mr. Thompson is a healthy, hearty, buckish fellow who eats "victuals" and "sweats" and believes in every kind of harsh, brutal physical exertion called "sport." Never again shall I put confidence in man.

M. E. S.

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It may be noted that this sentimental creature of Field's fancy adopted the initials of our quondam employer, Melville E. Stone. This was followed up next day by a note from another:

Evanston. Sept. 16. To the Editor: It may interest you to know that the editor of the *Evening Journal* does not now use the full name given him by his sponsors in baptism. He calls himself Slason Thompson, his first Christian name having been given to him in deference to the famous pagan warrior, son of Philip of Macedon; the second Christian name came from his uncle, Ahasuerus Slason (or Slosson) who owned the sawmill three miles northeast of Fredericton, N. B. I remember that as a boy Alexander Slason Thompson was reported as having the finest biceps in our part of the Dominion. Yours truly,

DOMINICK ST. SUAVE

And so the stage was set for the revelation Field had cherished up his sleeve for weeks. It came under date of Sept. 18, 1894:

Within the last week we have received a large number of letters bearing upon the interesting subject of the editor of the *Evening Journal*. Some of these communications we have printed because it occurred to us that it might be wise to illustrate how erroneous an impression of a writer's personality is gathered from a perusal of his work. Nearly 80 per cent of our correspondents seem to think that Slason Thompson is a tall, slender, stoop-shouldered gentleman of ascetic countenance, considerably beyond the prime of life, with white hair and a flowing venerable beard. One of our lady correspondents declares that she had Mr. Thompson pointed out to her at a meeting of the Anthropological Society last winter and that he appeared to be a studently old man, quaintly attired; she noticed particularly that he wore an old-fashioned stock and collar and carried a gold-headed cane. It would seem to be pretty generally understood by those who read the *Evening Journal*, but who have never met or seen him, that Mr. Thompson is a gentleman of the old school. It is the part of a conscientious newspaper to correct all erroneous impressions, and so we hasten to perform our manifest duty in presenting herewith a portrait of Mr. Thompson made after a photo-

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graph taken before Mr. Thompson came to Chicago and while he was living in San Francisco. The photograph was made by J. H. Peters at his gallery 25, 3rd Street, San Francisco, and it was handed to us by Mr. Horace Fletcher of New Orleans, who has long been one of Mr. Thompson's intimate friends. We gather from Mr. Fletcher's remarks that this picture was made the day after Mr. Thompson beat the world's record at vaulting with a long-pole and some time subsequent to his having lowered the world's record at sprinting a half mile. Upon Mr. Thompson's bosom are to be seen the two gold medals which were awarded to him (and which he still has)—one for his sprinting and the other for his long-pole performance.

Mr. Fletcher says that Mr. Thompson was the best built man on the slope, and we believe it, for this portrait exhibits certain physical beauties which even Sandow might envy. The biceps, as you will observe, are particularly fine; the legs a little bowed, perhaps, but physiologists agree that the legs of all men endowed with exceptional physical strength incline to curvature outward. The keen observer, too, will note how squarely Mr. Thompson stands; there is a positiveness in his attitude that is impressive—indeed, the whole attitude of the man as he poses before the camera of our friend Peters is combative and aggressive. Even the hair upon his square pugnacious head seems to rise belligerently. The dexter arm is exposed to view; the hand rests upon the top of a chair; and is half closed as if it were prepared for peace or war. What Mr. Thompson is holding in his other hand we cannot say, for the left or sinister arm is partly concealed behind his steatopygous torso. Perhaps he is grasping the head-rest whose inferior parts appear in the picture of the rear of Mr. Thompson's pedal extremities; perhaps he is concealing a weapon with which to chastise Peters, the photographer, in case the negative is unsatisfactory.

Those who know Mr. Thompson will recognize this portrait as an excellent one. We particularly admire the costume, because it admits of our seeing more of Mr. Thompson as he is than we could hope to see if Mr. Thompson had attired himself in the conventional dress of the period. When the Apollo Belvidere sat for his picture or stood for his statuary, he did not bother himself with superfluous clothing, neither did Venus di Medici or Cupid and Psyche, or the gladiator or Leda or the Greek Slave. These people had the correct artistic sense; they recognized the fact that when one sat for one's picture they did not want

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it to be simply an exploitation of one's wardrobe. By adopting this first beautiful picture principle of truly poetic art Mr. Thompson has given us a genuine classic.

No, there is nothing senile about Mr. Thompson. He himself is as stout and vigorous as his editorial utterances are. Long may he be so; long may he live to write, to better us with his honest manly teachings, and to encourage us with his hearty, forceful manly presence.

Now if the reader will eliminate the personal equation from this series of personal paragraphs, he will find in its plan and development a perfect specimen of Field's practice of mingling fact and fancy in making literary copy of his friends. To those who knew Field intimately and followed his use of the unusual word to express the exact shade of his thought, his hand was present in every paragraph of these letters as palpably as though they were printed in facsimile of his matchless script. After more than thirty years the concluding paragraph bears the same message of enduring good will and comradeship that held us together in the years when we walked and talked together.

CHAPTER XVII

THE SAINTS' AND SINNERS' CORNER

NO child of Eugene Field's ever-busy fancy—saving only "Little Boy Blue"—ever achieved wider fame than his "Saints' and Sinners' Corner," which, as a formal association, never existed. It was as casual as Topsy, and just grew. Shortly after he came to Chicago and after its one store devoted exclusively to books had moved from State Street to the corner of Madison and Wabash Avenues, Field, Ballantyne and I were in the habit of extending our luncheon hour to include a stroll of four blocks to McClurg's. We were not particularly interested in rare old books or first editions, although the seeds of the bibliophile were in the blood of both my companions. We had all just turned thirty and each in his way was bent on acquiring a working familiarity with the best use of the English language for the purposes of our profession. Field took with avidity to the prose and verse of the 15th and 16th centuries. Its unconscious humor and quaintness caught his vagrant fancy and he yielded himself without reserve to the fine collection of early English we found in the southwest corner of McClurg's bookstore. This department was presided over by George M. Millard, who made annual or biennial trips to London to attend sales of the rare collections through which the treasures of the tight little island were continually scattered to the four corners of the earth. When Millard did not go General McClurg, himself a book fancier of exacting taste, whose courage had been tried on Missionary Ridge, went himself and bought volumes of "forgotten lore" that Millard

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would have looked at with envious eye but a close grip on his purse.

This combination resulted in making that corner of McClurg's a choice browsing pasture for Field, and on its crowded shelves he found reading that enabled him to forget the paternal library safely stored in St. Louis. He began with the cycle of romances that treat of King Arthur. For three years (1883-6) Mallory's *History of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table* was the delight of his fastidious taste and the textbook for his conversation and letters. In the contemporaneous collections of early British Ballads he found that purity of diction and lilting melody that has given to his best verse the charm of simplicity that conceals the singer's art. The ballads of old were made to be sung, and Field learned their trick in the old corner at McClurg's. Where common knowledge of these British Ballads is content with a casual reading of the "Chevy Chase" and the "Nut Brown Maid," Field sought out the neglected pages of Anglo-Saxon chronicle and song. In the single word "Balow," which Field acquired from "Lady Anne Bothwell's Lament"—

BALOW, my babe, lie still and sleipe!
It grieves me sair to see thee weipe;
If thou be silent Ise be glad,
Thy maining makes my heart ful sad—

Field was introduced to a term of endearment which he proceeded to make conspicuously his own for a decade.

It was to this corner of Chicago's one bookstore that Field's frequent references to the book-buying excursions of General McClurg and Mr. Millard first attracted and then directed the footsteps of every book lover and book buyer, not only in Cook County but throughout the Mississippi Valley, from the Falls of St. Anthony to New Orleans and from Pittsburgh to Colorado Springs. Exchange editors throughout the West learned through the

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column of "Sharps and Flats" what bargains of type, paper and binding were to be had "for a price" at the corner of Madison and Wabash. But it was not until the spring of 1889 that the title "Saints and Sinners," long current in the *Daily News* office, finally broke into print in Field's column referring to a number of bibliomaniacs that daily congregated at McClurg's. But once mentioned it described the heterogeneous gathering so aptly that it stuck. The term had become an old story before Field announced "a sale of pews in the Saints' and Sinners' Corner at McClurg's immediately after the regular noon-time service next Wednesday," December 31st, 1890.

The dean of that company of booklovers was the late William F. Poole, the compiler of that monumental work "Poole's Index" and at that time librarian of the Chicago Public Library and subsequently the first to hold a similar position in the Newberry Library. Originally he came from Salem, Mass., which, with the fact that his son with John Kedzie of Evanston formed a celebrated battery of the Yale baseball nine, afforded Field an inexhaustible topic involving the venerable librarian in inextricable confusion with New England witches, baseball and librarians. The leading "Saints," determined by their cloth, were Dr. Frank W. Gunsaulus, head of the Armour Institute and pastor of the Peoples' Church, the Rev. Frank M. Bristol, then of Evanston and more recently bishop of the M. E. Church, Washington, and the Rev. M. Woolsey Stryker, pastor of the Fourth Presbyterian Church, Chicago, and later president of Hamilton College. They were powers in their respective pulpits, but when they entered the "Saints and Sinners' Corner" they left all clerical concepts behind them in the battle of wits with such sons of Baal as Ben T. Cable, George A. Armour, Charles J. Barnes and James W. Ellsworth, whose pockets bulged with wampum, and the ravenous horde of common sinners, who came to scoff and stayed to pay. In a published interview Dr. Gunsaulus is

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quoted as saying: "It was an association without rules of order or times of meeting. It consisted of the most interesting group of liars ever assembled. For ten years that 'Saints and Sinners' Corner' was a place where congenial fellows met. We simply feasted our eyes on beautiful books or old manuscripts and chatted with each other after the usual fashion of booklovers. The stories told were sometimes more amusing than profitable." The chief saint also told how Field on one occasion saved a book which he greatly coveted by inscribing the following quatrain on the flyleaf:

*Sweet friend for Jesus's sake forbear
To buy ye boke thou findest here,
For that when I do get ye pelf,
I mean to buy ye boke myselfe.*

EUGENE FIELD

If that sufficed to save the book, it merely goes to show that there is honor among saints as well as sinners. Field's own view of the kleptomaniac propensity of at least two of the saints may be judged from the following verses written as late as January 1, 1895:

TO DEWITT MILLER

*Dear Miller, you and I despise
The cad who gathers books to sell 'em
Be they but sixteen-mos in cloth
Or stately folios garbed in vellum.*

*But when a fellow has a prize
Another bibliophile is needing,
Why then, a satisfactory trade
Is quite a laudable proceeding.*

*There's precedent in Bristol's case—
The great collector-preacher-farmer—
And in the case of that divine
Who shrives the soul of P. D. Armour.*

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*When from their sapient, saintly lips
The words of wisdom are not dropping,
They turn to trade—that is to say,
When they're not preaching they are swopping.*

*So to the flock doth it appear
That this a most conspicuous fact is:
That which these godly pastors do
Must surely be a proper practice.*

*Now there's a pretty prize indeed
On which Da Vinci's art is lavished;
Harkee! the bonny dainty thing
Is simply waiting to be ravished.*

*And you have that for which I pine
As you should pine for this fair creature;
Come, now, suppose we made a trade
You take this gem and send the Beecher.*

*Surely these graceful, tender songs
(In samite garb with lots of gilt on)
Are more to you than those dull tomes
Her pastor gave to Lizzie Tilton.*

From the next citation of an extended paragraph under date of November, 1891, Field revealed why I was generally assigned to the bench of the scorner at these apocryphal meetings of the Saints and Sinners.

PROPOSED CURE FOR BIBLIOMANIA

A smile of exceeding satisfaction illuminated General McClurg's features as he walked into the corner yesterday noon and found that historic spot crowded with Saints and Sinners. Said he to Mr. Millard: "George, you are a great angler!"

Mr. Millard assumed a self-deprecatory expression. "I make no pretensions at all," he answered modestly. "My only claim is that I am not upon earth for my health."

"I see our handsome friend, Guy Magee, here today," observed General McClurg. "I thought he had opened a bookshop of his own."

"So he has," replied Mr. Millard, "at 24 North Clark Street, and

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a mighty good bookshop it is too. I visited the place last week and was surprised to see a number of beautiful books in stock."

"Let's see," said General McClurg, "24 North Clark Street is the other side of the bridge, isn't it?"

"Yes, just the other side—five minutes' walk from the Court House. Magee proposed to cater to the higher class of purchasers only, and with this end in view he has selected a choice line of books; in splendid bindings and in illustrated books he has a particularly large stock. Meanwhile he remains an active member of the noble fraternity that has made this corner famous. On Thanksgiving Day we are going in a body to look at his fine things, and to hold what our Saints call a praise-service in the snug, warm, cozy shop."

"That being the case, I will go, too," said General McClurg.

"The Saints and Sinners were full of Christmas spirit yesterday, and they were telling one another what they meant to buy for Christmas gifts. Dr. W. F. Poole said he had designs upon a set of Grose's "Antiquities," bound in turkey-red morocco. In answer to Mr. F. M. Larned's inquiry as to whom he intended to give this splendid present, Dr. Poole said: "To myself, of course! Christmas comes but once a year, and at that time of all times we are justified in gratifying the lusts of the spirit." (Applause)

"I think we all have reason to felicitate Brother Poole," said Mr. Charles J. Barnes. "Happening to visit the North Side the other day, I saw that work was progressing on the Newberry Library. I should like to know when the cornerstone of that splendid edifice is to be laid."

"The date has not yet been fixed," answered Dr. Poole, "but when it is laid it will be with the most elaborate ceremonies. The corner stone will be hollowed out, and in this cavity will be placed a number of priceless and curious relics."

Mr. Millard: "The Saints and Sinners should be represented at those ceremonies and in that hollow stone."

Mr. Poole: "Of course. As for myself, I shall contribute the stuffed tarantula I brought back from Arizona."

Dr. F. M. Bristol: "Another interesting relic that should go into that corner stone is the stump of the cigar which the Rev. Dr. Gunsaulus smoked at the camp meeting."

Dr. Gunsaulus: "I will cheerfully contribute that relic if upon his part Brother Bristol will contribute the portrait of Eliphalet Blatchford disguised as Falstaff." (Cheers)

The Rev. Dr. Stryker: "I have a complete uncut set of 'Monk and Knight' which I will be happy to devote to the same cause."

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Dr. Gunsaulus: "The contributions will be hardly complete without a box of those matches with which Brother Stryker wanted to kindle a bonfire which was to consume the body of the heretical Briggs. But speaking of that novel of mine ('Monk and Knight') reminds me that I wrote a poem on the railway the other day, and I will read it now if there be no objection. (Cries of 'Read it! Go ahead!') The poem, humble as it is, was suggested by seeing a fellow-passenger fall asleep over his volume of Bion and Moschus. This is the way it goes:

*Wake, wake him not; the book lies in his hands—
Bion and Moschus smile within his sleep;
Tired of our world, he lives in other lands—
Wanders in Greece, where fauns and satyrs leap.*

*Dull, even sweet, the rumble of the train—
'Tis Circe singing near her golden loom.
No garish lamps afflict his charmed brain—
Demeter's poppies brighten o'er her tomb.*

*But half awake he looks on starlit trees—
Sees but the huntress in her eager chase
Wake, wake him not; upon the fragrant breeze
Let horn and hound announce her rapid pace.*

*Gray olive's shade the dancing-naïad's smile,
Flutes lose their raptures in the murmuring stream;
These, these are visions modern cares beguile—
Echoes—reflections of the Old Greek's dream.*

Mr. Stryker: "That is good poetry, Brother Gunsaulus. If you would tone it down a little and contrive to work in a touch of piety here and there, I would be glad to print it in my next volume of hymns."

Mr. H. B. Smith; "I did not suppose that our Reverend Brother Gunsaulus ever attempted poetry. His verses have that grace and lilt that are the prime essentials to successful comic-opera libretto writing. When I want a collaborateur, I shall know whom to apply to."

Mr. Bristol: "The brother's poem indicates the influence of the Homer school. Can it be possible that our Plymouth Church friend has fallen into the snare spread for him by designing members of the South Side Hellenic organization?"

THE SAINTS' AND SINNERS' CORNER

Dr. Gunsaulus: "Since Brother Bristol seems so anxious to know, I will admit that I have recently joined the Armour Commandery of the South Side Sons of Homer."

Mr. Slason Thompson, heading off the discussion threatened by Dr. Gunsaulus's declaration, arose and informed the company that he was prepared to confer an inestimable boon upon his brother Saints and brother Sinners. "You are all," said he, "victims to an exacting and fierce mania—a madness that is unremitting in the despotism directing every thought and practice in your waking hours, and filling your brains with gilded fancies during your nocturnal periods of repose. (Applause) Many of you are so advanced in this mania that the mania itself has become seemingly your very existence (Cheers) and the feet of others are fast taking hold upon that path which leads down into the hopeless death of insanity. (Prolonged applause) Hitherto bibliomania has been regarded as incurable; humanity has looked upon it as the one malady whose tortures neither salve, elixir, plaster, poultice nor pill can alleviate; it has been pronounced immedicable, unmitigable and irremediable.

"For a long time," continued Mr. Thompson, "I have searched for an antidote against the subtle and terrific poison of bibliomania. At last, heaven be praised! I have found the cure! (Great sensation) Yes, a certain remedy for this madness is had in Keeley's bichloride of gold bibliomania bolus, a packet of which I now hold in my hand! Through the purging and regenerating influences of this magic antidote, it is possible for every one of you to shake off the evil with which you are cursed, and to restore that manhood which you have lost in your insane pursuit of wretched book fancies. The treatment requires only three weeks' time. You take one of these boluses before going to bed. In about three days you become aware that your olfactories are losing that keenness of function which has enabled you to nose out old books and to determine the age of these merely by sniffing at the binding. In a week distaste for book hunting is exhibited, and this increases until at the end of a fortnight you are ready to burn every volume you can lay hands on. No man can take this remedy for three weeks without being wholly and permanently cured of bibliomania. I have also another gold preparation warranted to cure the mania for old prints, old silver and old furniture."

Mr. Thompson had no sooner ended his remarks than a score of Saints and Sinners sprang up to protest against this ribald quackery. The utmost confusion prevailed for several moments. Finally the venerable Dr. Poole was accorded the floor. "Far be it from me," said he solemnly, "to lend my approval to any enterprise that con-

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templates bibliomania as a disease instead of a crime. (Applause) I live in Evanston, the home of that saintly woman Miss Willard, and under her teachings I have become convinced that bibliomania is a sin which must be eradicated by piety and not by pills. Rather than be cured by heretical means, I prefer not to be cured at all." (Great cheering)

Remarks in a similar vein were made by Messrs. Ballantyne, Larned, Hamlin, Smith, Barnes, Cole, Magee, Taylor and Carpenter. Dr. Gunsaulus seemed rather inclined to try the cure, but he doubted whether he could stick to it for three weeks. Finally a compromise was effected by the adoption of the following resolutions submitted by the Rev. Dr. Bristol:

"Resolved, that we Saints and Sinners, individually and collectively, defer, postpone, suspend and delay all experiment and essay with the bichloride bibliomania bolus until after the approaching holiday season, and furthermore

Resolved, that at the expiration of this specified interdicted season we will see about it."

Suspecting treachery, Dr. Gunsaulus secured the adoption of another resolution forbidding "any member of the organization to secure or apply for an option on the said boluses before formal action with reference to the vaunted cure had been taken by the Saints and Sinners in regular meeting."

As a complement to this fictitious report of a meeting that took place only in the teeming brain of Eugene Field, it is proper to describe the only formal gathering of the regular habitués of the far-famed corner, which was made forever memorable by Field's first production of "Frognall Dibdin's Ghost." Advance notifications of this event were sent to all concerned whose names had been used with and without their consent in connection with the Corner in "Sharps and Flats." Written in his microscopic script, it read:

SAINTS' AND SINNERS' CORNER

December 31, 1890

Be there 10.30 P.M. Sharp

THE SAINTS' AND SINNERS' CORNER

Needless to say the Sinners were there in full force, but the Saints, alack a day, had watch night services of their own to attend, and must be forgiven if their thoughts occasionally strayed from the clock to doings that were going on at the corner of Wabash and Madison. Field and Millard made restricted but ample preparations for the function, which the former, despite his objection to the word, deigned to call it. He himself concocted the pungent whisky punch, explaining that his poverty not his principles consented to the substitution of the wine of Kentucky for that of France in its composition. Long before midnight every chair, stool and bench in that deserted and dimly lighted bookstore was occupied and box seats improvised out of packing cases were at a premium. Lawyers, doctors, actors, newspaper men and book lovers unshriven of all their sins were there, without a single Saint to invoke a blessing or pronounce a benediction. By the aid of a few measly gas jets and some half dozen tallow candles in glass candlesticks that bore a suspicious resemblance to the ale bottles of Mr. Bass of blessed memory—the darkness was barely visible. Field announced that Elder Melville E. Stone, whose initials declared his denomination, “would preside over the meetin’ and line out the hymns, as his reverend father used to do.” Being no singer, Mr. Stone lined them out just the same and called sinners to the penitent bench to make a clean breast of their manifest and manifold transgressions against bibliomaniac law—pronounced “lore.” Promptly on the stroke of midnight every light was doused, and, as a shiver ran through that roystering crew, a deep sepulchral voice broke through the impenetrable gloom, chanting:

*“From Canaan’s beatific coast
I’ve come to visit here,
For I am Frognall Dibdin’s ghost,”
Says Dibdin’s ghost to me.*

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*I bade him welcome, and we twain
Discussed with buoyant hearts
The various things that appertain
To bibliomaniac arts.
"Since you are fresh from t'other side,
Pray, tell me of that host
That treasured books before they died,"
Says I to Dibdin's ghost.*

*"They've entered into perfect rest;
For in the life they've won
There are no auctions to molest,
No creditors to dun.
Their heavenly rapture has no bounds
Beside that jasper sea;
It is a joy unknown to Lowndes,"
Says Dibdin's ghost to me.*

By this time Field had his hearers spellbound by the deep rolling harmony of his organ-like voice, so wonderfully matching the theme and the shadowy scene. Every word was distinctly audible in that book-lined auditorium. Feeling himself the spell in which he held the assembled Sinners, he proceeded with deeper unction:

*"But what of those who scold at us
When we would read in bed?
Or wanting victuals, make a fuss
If we buy books instead?
And what of those who've dusted not
Our motley pride and boast?
Shall they profane that sacred spot?"
Says I to Dibdin's ghost.*

*"Oh, no! they tread that other path
Which leads where torments roll,
And worms—yes, bookworms—vent their wrath
Upon the guilty soul,
Untouched of bibliomaniac grace,
That saveth such as we,
They wallow in that dreadful place,"
Says Dibdin's ghost to me.*

THE SAINTS' AND SINNERS' CORNER

It is impossible to reproduce in cold type the exulting fanaticism that Field managed to throw into those concluding lines. Then the lights were relit and Frognall Dibdin was toasted in punch out of the stone bowl, and apple pie and cheese furnished forth a feast that lasted with song and story until the gray dawn peered above Lake Michigan to see what it was all about. Paul du Chaillu, the noted traveler, who was among the guests that New Year's eve of 1891, allowed that Eugene Field was the most entertaining host he had ever coped withal in all his travels among the dwarfs and giants of unexplored Africa. And he did not except himself, for whose ability in that direction he entertained an abiding faith.

By virtue of his frequent and incorrigible lapses from grace Francis Wilson was accorded by Field an absent fellowship in the mythical circle of Saints and Sinners, and treated accordingly, as the following paragraph with its concluding verses testify:

Francis Wilson, the comedian, is the possessor of the chair which Sir Walter Scott used in his library at Abbotsford. A beautiful bit of furniture it is, and well worth, aside from all sentimental consideration, the large price paid by the enterprising and discriminating curioso. As we understand it Bouton, the New York dealer, had this chair on exhibition for several months. Mr. Wilson happened along one day, having just returned from a professional tour in the West. Mr. William Winter, dramatic critic of the *Tribune*, was looking at the chair; he had been after it for some time, but had been waiting for the price to abate somewhat.

"The Players' Club should have that chair," said he to Bouton, "and if you'll give better terms I'll get a number of members to club together and buy it."

To this appeal Bouton sturdily remained deaf. After Mr. Winter had left the place, Wilson said to Bouton, "Send the chair up to my house; here is a check for the money." . . .

Horace Greeley used to say that the best way to resume was to resume; so, in the science of collecting, it behooves the collector never to put off till to-morrow what he can pick up to-day. This theory has been most succinctly and beautifully set forth in one of the hymns

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recently compiled by the Archbishop of the North side (Dr. Bristol),
page 17 :

*How foolish of a man to wait
When once his chance is nigh;
Tomorrow it may be too late
Some other man may buy.
Nay, brother, comprehend the boon
That's offered in a trice,
Or else some other all too soon
Will pay the needful price.*

*Should some fair book engage your eye,
Or print invite your glance,
Oh, trifle not with fate, but buy
While yet you have the chance!
Else, glad to do you grievous wrong,
Some wolf in human guise,
Some bibliophile shall snoop along
And nip that lovely prize!*

*No gem of purest ray serene
Gleams in the deathless sea
There is no flower that blooms unseen
Upon the distant lea,
But the same snooping child of sin
With fad or mania curst,
Will find it out and take it in
Unless you get there first.*

*Though undue haste may be a crime,
Procrastination's worse;
Now—now is the accepted time
To eviscerate your purse!
So buy what finds you find today—
That is the safest plan;
And if you find you cannot pay,
Why, settle when you can.*

Here is the bottom law and the gospel of the impecunious book fancier. Comprehend the prize and eviscerate your purse, but buy now and settle when you can.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE LENGTHENING SHADOWS

EUGENE FIELD reached the summit of his productive powers in 1889. During the next six years it was one long struggle with that weak rebellious stomach of his. He talked bravely of doing his best literary work when he was a grandfather; he planned and toiled assiduously toward his heart's desire for a home of his own, where, surrounded by his family and friends and his beloved books and curios, he could work when it pleased him, loll about free from calls and cares, and putter around generally. He had a perfect genius for puttering—except in his work.

The first physical sign that Field had reached the limit of his tether to the daily grind of journalism was when he consented to avail himself of the quasi rest of a trip to Europe with his family, drawing pay without a complete hiatus in his work. It was originally planned that he should sail in December (1889), but during the summer his dyspepsia "afflicted him so grievously" that the date of departure was advanced to October. So by the 24th of that month we find him located at No. 20 Alfred Place, Bedford Square, London, while "the children have already done Tussaud's and the Zoo and are preparing for a descent on the Crystal Palace." On the eve of starting for Europe he wrote to his life-long friend and benefactor, Melvin L. Gray:

"The attack of indigestion with which I am suffering began last June, resulting from irregularity in hours of eating and sleeping and from too severe application to

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work. The contemplated voyage will do me good, I think, and I hope to gather much valuable material while I am abroad. I shall seek to acquaint myself with such local legends as may seem to be capable of treatment in verse. Most of my time will be spent in London, in Paris and in Holland. I expect to find among the Dutch much to inspire me. I carry numerous letters of introduction—all kinds of letters except letters of credit. I regret that the potent name of Rothschild will not figure in the list of my trans-Atlantic acquaintances."

Field and his whole family were very much disappointed not to find Cowen on their arrival in London, for they had relied on him to play their Mæcenæ there as he had in Denver and Chicago. But Cowen had become a busy factotum for James Gordon Bennett, who about that time extended his newspaper enterprise to include London as well as Paris in his circle of New York *Heralds*. It did not take Field long to realize that London was not chiefly renowned for its Cheapside. On November 13th he wrote to his "dear Cowen":

"I am now, so to speak, in God's hands. Getting the four children fitted out for school and paying a quarter's tuition in advance has reduced me to a condition of financial weakness which fills me with the gloomiest apprehension. You of fertile resource must tell me what I am to do. I will not steal; to beg I am ashamed. My bank account shows £15. Verily, I am in hell's hole."

Having placed the four children in school at Hanover, Field wrote to Mr. Gray, January 9, 1890, saying that his health had improved much since a previous letter. "I am now feeling," said he, "quite as I felt when I was in my original condition—perhaps I should say my normal condition of original sin." In this same letter he spoke of the poems and tales he was sending to the *Daily News* and *America* and of a proposition made to him by a friend in New York (Francis Wilson, to publish a new volume of

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verse at \$20 a copy limited to fifty copies). "Of course," wrote he, "I cannot accede to the proposition." But saying he would not, he did. Early in 1892 Francis Wilson, at his own proper cost, issued a collection of translations and paraphrases of Horace by Eugene and Roswell Field, entitled, *Echoes from the Sabine Farm*. Only one hundred copies were printed—thirty on Japan paper and seventy on Whatman's hand-made. They were most picturesquely illustrated and beautifully bound. The *Echoes* were subsequently issued in popular form by McClurg & Co. and finally, after Field's death, constituted Volume VI of his complete works issued by Scribner's Sons. The contents of this volume are very uneven, due to the hurried way in which the brothers prepared a large number of the translations. Twenty-eight of the sixty-nine verses are by Roswell Field and they are far from being inferior to the average emanations from his more famous brother's pen. That he possessed no little of Eugene's whimsical touch but not his faultless rhythm may be judged from the following free paraphrase of an unplaced lyric from the Horatian block:

AT THE BALL GAME

*What gods or heroes, whose brave deeds none can dispute,
Will you record, O Clio, on the harp and flute?
What lofty names shall sportive Echo grant a place
On Pindar's crown or Helicon's shadowy space?*

*Sing not, my Orpheus, sweeping oft the tuneful strings,
Of gliding streams and nimple winds and such poor things;
But lend your measures to a theme of noble thought,
And crown with laurel these great heroes, as you ought.*

*Now steps Ryanus forth at call of furious Mars,
And from his oaken staff the sphere speeds to the stars;
And now he gains the tertiary goal and turns
While whiskered balls play round the timid staff of Burns.*

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*Lo! from the tribunes on the bleachers comes a shout
Beseeching Ausonius to line 'em out
And as Apollo's flying chariot cleaves the sky,
So staunch Ausonius lifts the frightened ball on high.*

*Like roar of ocean beating on the Cretan cliff
The strong Komiske gives the panting sphere a biff;
And from the tribunes rise loud murmurs everywhere
When twice and thrice Mikellius beats the mocking air.*

*And as Achilles' fleet the Trojan waters sweeps
So horror sways the throng, Pfefferius sleeps!
And stalwart Konnor, though by Mercury inspired,
The Equus Carolus defies, and is retired.*

*So waxes fierce the strife between these god-like men
And as the hero's fame grows by Virgilian pen
So let Clarksonius Maximus be raised to heights
As far above moon as moon o'er lesser lights.*

*But as for me, the ivy leaf is my reward.
If you a place among the lyric bards accord;
With crest exalted, and O "People," with delight,
I'll proudly strike the stars and so be out of sight.*

Nothing in Gladstone's *Odes of Horace* bears distant resemblance to this. Among the *Echoes from the Sabine Farm* to which neither brother attached his initials will be found the verses "To Mother Venus." One stanza, the third, bears internal evidence that Field may have had one little finger in its composition:

*You'll find young Paullus passing fair,
Modest, refined and tony;
Go, now, incite the favored wight!
With Venus for a crony
He'll outshine all at feast and ball
And conversazione!*

Immediately on getting back from Europe, Field resumed his daily "sawing wood" in the "Sharps and Flats" column

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of the *Chicago Record*, but the sawing lacked the irrepres-
sible buoyancy that had been characteristic of it for many
years. Then he sawed for the joy he got out of it, but now
he seemed to realize that it behooved him to saw wood
against the winter that he saw approaching. Field recog-
nized, as none of his family or friends did, that his health
was permanently impaired and that every return of his
dyspeptic attacks left him weaker. He could joke about
doing his best work when he was a grandfather, but he
knew that it was not safe to wait and so he applied himself
almost feverishly to the production of verse and tales in
marketable lengths. His earlier books were beginning to
sell widely and well, and were followed in quick succession
by the *Echoes from the Sabine Farm*, *With Trumpet and
Drum*, the *Second Book of Verse*, *The Holy Cross and
Other Tales* and *Love Songs of Childhood*. These all con-
sisted of the gleanings from the surplus of his earlier con-
tributions to the *Morning News* and the *Denver Tribune*,
interleaved, so to speak, with such new material as he was
furnishing to the *Record*.

But something nearer to his heart than writing "Sharps
' and Flats" came into Field's life about this time. After a
lapse of many years two more children were born to Mrs.
Field to brighten the poet's hearthstone and refresh his
memories of the days in Denver when Trotty, Melvin,
"Pinny" and "Daisy" were his associates, playmates and
living models of childhood's ever changing delights and
vexations. The newcomers were named respectively
Roswell Francis and Ruth—the former after Field's father
and mother, with a change of a vowel to match the boy's
sex, and Ruth after Mrs. Gray, in whose home Field had
found the disinterested affection of a mother. With these
two additional hostages to fortune, and that fortune having
taken a decided turn for the better, thanks to the popularity
of his books combined with a more appreciative stipend
from the *Record*, the long-cherished hope for a home be-

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came a possibility. For twenty years of their wedded life the Fields had lived in rented quarters and occasionally in rented rooms with board. After coming to Chicago in 1883 they rented apartments on Chicago Avenue; from there successively they moved to North Wells Street, Eugenia Street, Crilly Place, Fullerton Avenue, and Evanston Avenue, Buena Park. This list may not be complete, but it will serve to give an idea of the nomadic sort of life Field led up to the time that he felt financially able to become a taxpayer, a householder and landed proprietor. With many a quip and turn of humor, mixed with mingled touches of satire and sentiment, the story of how Field and his wife achieved the lot and house which they named *The Sabine Farm* is told in the twenty-five chapters of *The House—An Episode in the Lives of Reuben Baker, Astronomer, and of his Wife Alice*. Each chapter represented a day's contribution to the "Sharps and Flats" column and reflected more or less faithfully the progress of the work. But not consecutively or conscientiously.

Field was enabled to finance the purchase of the building and lot on Clarendon Avenue and reconstruct the house through the never-failing assistance of Mr. Gray and the coöperation of Mr. Lawson and Mr. Stone. The first instalment of *The House* was printed on May 15, 1895, and the last on August 15, leaving the story or episode unfinished. So impatient was he to get under a roof of his own that he finally entered into possession before the carpenters and painters were out.

The house upon which Field expended so much thought and for which he forestalled a considerable portion of his weekly stipend was an old-fashioned, commodious structure in Buena Park, a northern division of Chicago. It stood well back from Clarendon Avenue in a grove of native oaks. Its yard was mostly a sand waste, which it pleased Eugene to plant with popcorn and potatoes—the latter he insisted on digging up to see how they sprouted.

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In Joel Chandler Harris' introduction to *The House*, he says that it portrays Field's "genius and his humor in a new light," and continues:

"We have seen him scattering the germs of his wit broadcast in the newspapers—we have seen him putting on the cap and bells, as it were, to lead old Horace through some modern paces—we have heard him singing his tender lullabies to children—we have wept with him over 'Little Boy Blue,' and all the rest of those quaint songs—we have listened to his wonderful stories—but only in the story of 'The House' do we find his humor so gently turned, so deftly put, and so ripe for the purpose of literary expression. It lies deep here, and those who desire to enjoy it as it should be enjoyed must place their ears close to the heart of nature. The wit and the rollicking drollery that were but the surface indications of Mr. Field's genius have here given place to the ripe humor that lies as close to tears as to laughter—the humor that is a part and a large part of almost every piece of English literature that has outlived the hand that wrote it."

Happily that humor had been present all along the way of Eugene Field's literary career, from "The New Baby" (*St. Louis Journal*, March, 1878) to *The Love Affairs of a Bibliomaniac* (1895). The former which is given on page 59 would indicate that the ripe humor to which Mr. Harris pays such worthy praise was not a child of Field's mature fancy.

The Field of 1895 could have put something more of the wise philosophy of forty-five years into "The New Baby," but he could not have added a single whiff of peppermint to the humor of that fuzzy babe opening those eyes of misty Eugene-Field-blue on a new world.

Between the issue of *A Little Book of Western Verse* and *A Little Book of Profitable Tales*, in 1889 and 1895, Field had experienced a series of disappointments and one great bereavement that might have embittered any genius

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not gifted with "a heart for any fate." His trip to Europe in 1889-90 failed to restore him to the strength for the strenuous work he laid out for himself. The death of his eldest son Melvin was the severest blow within his family Field ever experienced. Melvin was a serious youth, with nothing of the volatile precocity of "Pinny" and "Daisy." Field spoke of his death as a painful subject "yet not without reconciling features, for he met death calmly and bravely." After his return to America, on June 7, 1891, he wrote to his steadfast friend Mr. Gray:

On Thursday, the 28th ultimo, we laid Melvin's remains to rest finally in Graceland Cemetery. The lot I selected and bought is in a pretty, accessible spot, sheltered by two oak trees, just such a spot as the boy himself, with his love for nature, would have chosen. The interment was very private, none being present but the family. Others were in the cemetery making preparations for the observance of Decoration Day. Of this number were many Germans and these, attracted by the appearance of the pretentious German casket in which our boy's body lay, gathered around wonderingly. They were curious to know the story of the casket, for they had not seen one like it for many years. But the ceremony, however painful, was beautiful—beautiful in the caressing glory of the sunlight that was all around, in the fragrant velvety verdure that composed the bed to which we consigned the ashes of the beloved one, in the gentle music of the birds that nested hard by and knew no fear and in the love which we bore him and always shall.

Such was the spot and scene, with its fragrant memories, that in the season of falling leaves some four years later was to receive and embosom in its rustic verdure the poet himself, who, in the dedication of *With Trumpet and Drum*, had referred to that sleeping boy in these lines:

*So come; though I see not his dear little face,
And hear not his voice in this jubilant place,
I know he were happy to bid me enshrine
His memory deep in my heart with your play.*

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*Ah, me! but a love that is sweeter than mine
Holdeth my boy in its keeping today,
And my heart it is lonely—so, little folk, come,
March in and make merry with trumpet and drum.*

Field's health all through the World's Fair year, 1893, was a subject of constant solicitude to his friends, but it could not restrain him from participating in the pageant of that amazing exhibit of American progress in things artistic as well as material. The far-famed Midway, which set the pace in bringing occidental and bizarre freaks and follies to the eyes and ears of Pilgrim fathers and Puritan mothers, afforded Field material for many a spicy paragraph and satirical squib. It even enticed him away from the ballad and early English forms of verse into the rondel that fitted the meter to the occasion, as witness this from "Sharps and Flats," June 14, 1893:

RONDEL

*Come boys, let's away to the Midway Plaisance!
There are visions of loveliness there to behold,
Oh, the lithe Moorish maidens with bangles of gold
And eyes that will set you afire at a glance!*

*And the houris from Germany, Italy, France,
And Javanese beauties of minikin mold!
Come boys, let's away to the Midway Plaisance!*

*They discount the marvelous yarns of romance
Ingeniously spun by the authors of old;
Why, the half of the charms of that place can't be told.
And hush! we will see that Algerian dance—
Come boys, let's away to the Midway Plaisance!*

* The spirit of Horace, not Cotton Mather, was hovering around Gene that soft and dreamy night in June, or mayhap he penned this invitation to the boys as they floated lazily around the lagoon to the lazier dip of an Italian gondolier's oar.

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How time and ill health had put no curb bit on the liberty his muse would take with the names of men in public life is shown by such verses as this parody:

*The shades of night were falling fast
As through the World's Fair portal passed
A certain Adlai Stevenson,
Whose bead-like eyes were fixed upon
The Midway.*

(Three stanzas omitted)

*But why pursue this harrowing tale?
Far better we should drop the veil
Of secrecy, before begin
His exploits in that Vale of Sin,
The Midway.*

In the fall of 1893 Field suffered from a very painful attack of pneumonia, and recovering, on the doctor's advice visited California. Madame Modjeska put her ranch—about one thousand acres midway between Los Angeles and San Diego—at Field's disposal, which courtesy for some reason different from that given, the presence of mountain lions, he failed to accept. Neither did he find the "glorious climate" of California the tonic for all his ills he had been led to expect. So he returned to Chicago via New Orleans. He found the climate and social conditions in the latter city so congenial that he returned there for a short visit in the spring of 1894, but "The House" and home instinct had possession of him, so in May he turned his face once more toward the city by Lake Michigan just east of the historic Waller Lot. From the vantage ground of that lot in Buena Park he saw the Sabine Farm and its old-fashioned house emerge into the sunshine of realization, as has been told already. From that shelter, after many years of wandering, he was only lured to occasional readings, which he abhorred, in order to put money in his purse

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toward liquidating its cost. Through the irony of fate this investment in the Sabine Farm proved the most successful pecuniary venture of his life; and the pity of it is that he did not live to enjoy it. Since this outline of Field's career was begun, the Sabine Farm of a few acres, now in a densely settled section of Chicago, has been sold for \$100,000 and on its site a modern building will rise to the skies.

If Field had lived to see the delivery of the title deeds, he might have compared it with the movement of Coxey's army on Washington, which he described as "the biggest real estate transfer on record."

CHAPTER XIX

THE CURTAIN FALLS

THROUGH nearly two score years we have traced the career of this unique character, a lovable man, a lover of mankind, a worshipper of women, a companion and student of children, a matchless singer of lullabies, a satirist of literary pretenders, a master of the purest, simplest, most effective English ever poured into the insatiable maw of a newspaper every day—a strange and, in some respects, an unaccountable human being, but human to his finger tips. And now we approach the sad days when the grasshopper became a burden and we must leave him. Like his own Little Johnny Jones, in the late fall of 1895 Eugene Field's "life on earth was through," but his life work to amuse, to cheer, to console, to laugh with those that laugh and weep with those who weep, after an interval of thirty years marches gaily on. There are paradoxes in Eugene Field's life which cannot be accounted for. Neither is the attempt worth while. Neither saint nor sinner, and precious little of either, he was entitled to rest in the sunshine of the lot in Graceland where "soft winds lisped the legends" of a happy and merry life.

It was in July, 1895, that Eugene Field entered into possession of the home he had longed for and had fairly earned from despicable fortune. It was his very own, "provided," as he told the writer, "with all the modern conveniences, including an ample porch and a genial mortgage." There he could sit upon his own "front porch" and gaze dreamily across vacant lots to the shore of Lake Michigan—now a civic bathing beach where countless thousands assemble to

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make the welkin ring with their joyous shouts. Inside the house was roomy and cheery, with lots of God's own sunlight pouring in through ample windows. Contrary to the usual order in this climate of the prevailing southwest wind, the porch faced northeast. The feature of the first floor was the library, where for the first time in his nomadic career Field had sufficient shelf room for his books and cabinets for his curios. Some of his artist friends balked at their arrangement as crude and incongruous, but Field preferred them that way. Everything seemed to have settled into its appropriate niche and no piece of bric-a-brac was heard to swear at its neighbor. Of this remarkable collection, before it was moved from the old-fashioned house on Evanston Avenue adjoining the Waller lot, his friend Julian Ralph of the *New York Sun* wrote:

He had cabinets and closets filled with the wreckage of England, New England, Holland and Louisiana; walls littered with mugs and prints, and pictures, plates and warming-pans; shelves crowded with such things, and mantelpieces likewise loaded, through two stories of his house. All were curios of value, or else beauty, for he was no ignoramus in his madness. His den above stairs, where he sat surrounded by a great and valuable collection of first editions and other prized books, was part of the museum. There hung the axe Mr. Gladstone gave him at Hawarden, and the shears that Charles A. Dana used during a quarter of a century. These two prizes he cherished most. He had been to Mr. Dana and begged the shears, receiving the promise that he should have them left to him in Mr. Dana's will. He waited five years, grew impatient beyond endurance, and then came to New York and got the shears from Paul Dana.

To his new home on Clarendon Avenue Field brought this heterogeneous collection. As Edward Everett Hale in his all too brief introduction to the *Little Book of Profitable Tales* says, "I do not think that he thought much of art," which was not contradicted by anything displayed at the Sabine Farm. His covetous eye was ever on the alert for things rare, queer or out of print. The grotesque in art

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appealed to him where he detested it in the printed page. But he took delight in beautiful bindings. However, in the very midst of his fever for collecting, there was a strain of New England shrewdness in his buying that resulted in his acquiring many a bargain. This was recognized by Mr. Ralph when he remarked that Field "was no ignoramus in his madness."

It was the strangest museum ever gathered by mortal that Field surrounded himself with at The Sabine Farm, but it reflected the stranger mortal who collected it. Of course there was a "thumb" Bible keeping company with the smallest dictionary in the world. There was a special corner for canes—canes that were freaks; canes that had a freakish history and plain ugly crooked-handled unpedigreed canes that had been presented to Field because he loved canes too much to carry one. The pie plate of New England, crackled with age till it seemed ready to break apart, stood cheek by jowl with queer faced clocks which ticked merrily and never went on a strike at the same moment. Those clocks took no more account of time than their owner. They were a merry hard-faced lot.

His library was a unique storeroom of books—inherited, purchased and presented. The first came from his father and had lain in cold obstruction in a St. Louis loft for a score of years, the second represented investment of a goodly share of the "five" or "ten" he had been able to abstract from Mrs. Field's weekly allowance and the third dropped upon him from the printing presses of the land bearing the impressive autographs of their proud authors who were generally amply repaid by the beautiful sign manual of the bored recipient. Side by side with volumes that had no excuse for being, were many of inestimable value for themselves or for associations, a queer medley that Field loved because it was queer and his.

Field abhorred jewelry, except museum pieces, and yet when he returned from Holland he wore a hideous silver

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ring on the third finger of his left hand with such pride that he had his photograph taken so that he could display it. Happily he was thinking so intently about the ring that he forgot to assume that affected look of unconsciousness that so often spoils otherwise perfect pictures. It was set with a huge green crystal—a gorgeous travesty on an emerald. Happily for Mrs. Field, Eugene's purse did not afford the jewelry his taste would have hung upon her neck and arms. She would have been loaded down with the spoils of all the curiosity shops from the headwaters of the Nile to the frozen fiords of Norway. And their incongruity would have filled him with sardonic pleasure.

But nothing in that collection of all the treasures he had been gathering from the out-of-the-way corners of the earth gave him comparable pleasure to the sense of landed proprietorship that shone in his eyes and radiated from him as he moved about on the Sabine Farm. The fact that it was not paid for gave him no depressing thoughts. When the weekly deductions from his salary had been arranged between the *Record* office and Mr. Gray, Field took no further thought on that account. He was an instinctive believer in the axiom of equity that considers that which should be done as done, and let care go hang. The deduction came out of Mrs. Field's allowance. He was beginning to receive royalties; he was his own landlord, paid taxes and did not pay rent. What greater freedom from the ills that had beset him could he desire? Under his own vine and fig tree he purposed to sit him down and become the merry sage of Buena Park. He would still contribute paragraphs to the *Morning Record*, but he would operate a typewriter and send his copy to the office by messenger.

Few of his friends knew that Eugene Field ever wrote anything except by hand. But along about 1887 he took a notion that he could save time by typing his copy. He soon tired of the machine. The banging of the keys grated on his sensitive ears and nerves. But among my scraps I find a

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poem "To Julia" typewritten, the title and signature in Field's handwriting. It is dated Feb. 14, 1887. The first and concluding verses run:

*Accept, dear girl, this little token
And, if between the lines you seek
You'll find the love I've often spoken
The love my dying lips shall speak.*

*So take, dear love, this little token
And if there speaks in any line
The sentiment I'd fain have spoken—
Say, will you kiss your valentine?*

Such is the power of association of everything Eugene Field ever wrote with his most distinctive exquisite script that this verse seems almost a foreign production or a copy, but for the easily discernible style of the author and two pen corrections, indubitably his.

But the sedentary attractions of The Sabine Farm—its books, its oaks and its amateur beginnings of a garden, vegetable preferred, quickly had a deterrent effect on Field's trips downtown. He preferred to do his work at home, and commissioned one of his boys as his regular messenger to carry his copy to the office. In that copy along in August we find the following:

Yes, there is no doubt that these rains which we have had in such plenty for the last three days have interrupted and otherwise interfered with the sports of many people. Yet none of us should sulk or complain when he comes to consider how badly we needed the rain and what a vast amount of good these refreshing down pourings have done. Vegetation was in a bad way. The trees had begun to have a withered look, and the grass was turning brown. What a change has been wrought by the grace of the rain! Nature smiles once more; the lawns are green, the trees are reviving; the roadsides are beautiful with the grasses, the ferns, and the wild flowers, among which insectivorous life makes cheery music. The rain has arrayed old Mother Earth in a bright new garb.

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The month of September is close at hand; the conditions of its coming are favorable. There is fun ahead for all of us sentimental people. A beautiful moon is waiting rather impatiently for the clouds to roll by; the moon is always at its best in the full summer time.

How good it is to live in this beautiful world of ours; how varied and countless are the blessings bestowed upon us, how sweet is the beneficence of Nature; how dear is the companionship of humanity!

Nothing—a home of his very own; books on every hand; two young children born to brighten and refresh his joy in life; increasing fortune and recognition from his literary works—nothing could make up to Eugene Field the narrowing of that “companionship of humanity” which for over twenty years he had found in the newspaper offices in which he had worked and played. And so in this same month of August, 1895, we find him giving expression to his longing for companionship in the following lines:

MY SABINE FARM

*At last I have a Sabine farm
Abloom with shrubs and flowers;
And garlands gay I weave by day
Amid those fragrant flowers;
And yet, O fortune hideous,
I have no blooming Lydias;
And what, ah, what's a Sabine farm to us
Without its Lydias?*

*Within my cottage is a room
Where I would fain be merry;
Come one and all unto that hall,
Where you'll be welcome, very!
I've a butler who's Hibernian—
But no, I've no Falernian!
And what, ah, what's a Sabine farm to you
Without Falernian?*

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*Upon this cosey Sabine farm
What breeds my melancholy?
Why is my Muse down with the blues
Instead of up and jolly?
A secret this between us:
I'm shy of a Mæcenat!
And what, oh, what's a Sabine farm to
Me without Mæcenat!*

There can be no mistaking the appeal of this cry for that intimate "comradeship" which, as already quoted from his brother Roswell's preface to *A Little Book of Western Verse*, was the indispensable factor in his brother's life. So, "as the hart panteth after the water brooks," so Eugene Field amid the dear possessions of the Sabine Farm panted for the old companionships. He could send his copy by messenger to the *Record* office, but he could not bring the associated memories of that office to the Sabine Farm. In default of this he made the long trip to town to lunch with friends at Vogelsangs or meet them in the Saints' and Sinners' Corner at McClurg's. Here he held almost daily séances, joshing the saints and swapping yarns with the sinners and mulling over the materials for *The Love Affairs of a Bibliomaniac*—the opening chapter of which appeared in his "Sharps and Flats" column on August 30th. Here in the confidences of the Corner he confided to a chosen few that by reason of his long convalescence the grasshopper of Ecclesiastes, with no reflection on our clerical brethren, had "become a burden." Here, too, he fell into the practice of relieving his weariness by transferring whole poems from Dr. Gunsaulus' pockets to his own from whence they were appropriated for "Sharps and Flats," wherein they appeared without identifying initials. Some of these spoils of the Saints have found currency among the later collections of Field's verses. Once warned of their presence they are readily detected, as lacking something of the genuine Field flavor.

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But Field's bearing and general conversation at these Corner meetings were so generally hopeful and light-hearted that his associates had renewed confidence that the new home had worked a temporary cure for the dyspepsia that had preyed upon him for so many years. His column, too, reflected the genial glow of a spirit relieved from all pecuniary worries, which, however lightly they sat on Field, could not have been long absent from his thoughts during the frequent vacations he was obliged to take beginning with his European trip in 1889.

Besides, Field got real pleasure and daily satisfaction in writing *The Love Affairs of a Bibliomaniac*. In it he could give full play to every vagrant fancy that ran through a mind steeped in the cult of books and the fantasies of fairies. He was happily fitted by a whimsical nature for holding up the mirror to the faults and fascinations of book hunting in the jungles of printed lore. He had both satire and sympathy for those who bought with more money than wit and those who were short on money but long on wit. And as the days of September and October passed the story wound its halting way through the "Sharps and Flats," being interrupted frequently by columns of irrelevant paragraphs that shocked the "first literary circles of Chicago" or kept the world informed of the delectable society of Buena Park in such items as this:

A dessert of sliced bananas and oranges is all the rage in the Park this season. Tapioca pudding is a thing of the past. How true it is that humanity is ever variable and fickle.

But such lapses were but space-fillers between the chapters of the *Love Affairs*. These occupied his best thoughts, and as they were composed from an inexhaustible stock of fact and fable on the subject they seemingly might have gone on indefinitely. He seemed loath to bring them to an end and apparently they might have gone on forever—

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the freshest, sweetest, most delicate flavors of his fancy. But how they were to end, we shall never know.

During the latter years of his life and when the urge for funds to buy, build and furnish "The Sabine Farm" was strong upon him, and royalties had not begun to drop fatness into his estate, Field permitted himself to be inveigled into going on the reading platform with such well-known entertainers as Bill Nye, James Whitcomb Riley and George W. Cable. For such entertainments he had peculiar gifts far superior to any of his associates. He had a marked personality, that immediately attracted and interested the spectator, a face as mobile as an April sky, upon which the emotions played at the will of a born mimic and artist. To these equipments for the platform was added a voice of unusual depth of tone and carrying power. He could purr as softly as a kitten or growl as gruffly as a lion. He had also an ingratiating hesitation of speech, just enough to pique curiosity as to what was coming but not enough to blunt the point of wit or humor. But with all these qualifications and with the urge of more financial return for one reading than for a month's writing, Field's aversion to the public platform was so great that directors of lyceums had great difficulty in persuading him to make a few casual appearances. So it is small wonder to find him expressing himself thus on the subject:

The business of appearing in public as a reader of one's own writings is not as pleasant as a misguided few might fancy. To us there appears to be no more graceless occupation. The inconveniences of travel, the changes of climate, the vicissitudes of weather, the different tastes of different publics—these are but the beginnings of the inevitable horrors that attend upon the career of him who takes to the platform.

The bards and minstrels of old had an easier time of it. They played fewer but longer engagements. There were no one night stands in those good old times. The "talented and popular" minnesinger did not have to jump from Weeping Water,

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Nebraska, to West Brookfield, Massachusetts. He wasn't compelled to do "Western Dialect" one week and Horatian paraphrases the next. There were no way freights in those days landing a fellow at his destination at 3.08 A.M. When a minnesinger came to town he came to stay for a month of Sundays, and there was nothing too good for him. If the critic objected to his poems or objected to the way he touched his light guitar, he was disemboweled or otherwise reprov'd. The poet had things all his own way; royalty housed and fed him and people considered it a great honor to be permitted to hear him drone out the poems, which as likely as not he had cribbed from worthier poets in a far-distant country. There was some show for platform poets in those dim, majestic ages. True, there were no lecture bureaus then, nor any railways, but humanity was kind and the walking was good.

Thus it appears that Field shared the view of the lecture platform which Bret Harte expressed in a letter to his wife in 1874—"Take care of the children, teach them to avoid becoming lecturers, caution Totty against marrying a poet and believe me, Nan, dismally your Frank." However, Field's Julia never knew a dismal Eugene. ~

But if Eugene Field abhorred and despised the public platform, there was nothing on earth that gave him more unadulterated joy than to find himself the center of a private company at a friend's house where without embarrassment or self-consciousness he could expose his wares. It was on an occasion like this at a dinner party on his return from Europe that he told the familiar story of another dinner party he had attended in England where he was seated between the wife of a well-known member of Parliament and Mrs. Humphrey Ward, then at the height of her Gladstone-boosted popularity. The conversation turned to Phineas T. Barnum, then in London with his "greatest show on earth." One of his neighbors asked Field if he had ever met the famous showman.

"Met Mr. Barnum?" Field said he replied. "Met him? Indeed, Madame, it was the most fortunate meeting of my

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life. To that meeting I owe everything I am and hope to be. When that good man first discovered me I was living in a tree in the wilds of Missouri, clothed in skins and feeding on nuts and wild berries. Yes, Madame, P. T. Barnum took me from my mother, clothed me in the bifurcated raiment of civilization, sent me to school, where I began to lisp in numbers before I had mastered the multiplication table, and I have been lisping ever since." He said that his open-eyed auditors swallowed the yarn with many a "Really!" "How curious!" "Isn't it marvelous!"

That memorable night he regaled us with a score of stories of how the literary circles of London listened with raised eyebrows to and swallowed with avidity the most outlandish tales of adventures with wild beasts and Indians in the suburbs of Chicago that his fertile fancy could invent. Many of these stories he has told in his "Sharps and Flats," but the best of them and the inimitable way in which they were told cannot be reproduced. Such is the fate of sounds that addressed the ear in the freedom of social intercourse before the days of the dictograph.

It was on an unpremeditated occasion something akin to that just related that I saw Eugene Field in the flesh for the last time. Our family was spending the summer of 1895 in Evanston with Mrs. Thompson's mother, when one night in October, just as we were about to retire, I was called to the telephone and recognized Field's voice. Without ado he inquired if we had any pie in stock, for he was coming up to sample a slice from the pantry of my Yankee mother-in-law, who hailed from Vermont. He was promptly bidden to come along. In a few minutes in he walked and was made welcome to the freedom of the pantry, well stocked with pie, pickles and plenty of cheese and crackers. The pie was of the Ludlow, Vermont, brand, such as Mary Field French used to make, and Field proceeded to put his ancient foe at defiance on the Rip Van

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Winkle principle that "this little slice don't count." Between mouthfuls of pie and cheese, Field accounted for his presence in Evanston at that hour. He had been corralled into giving a reading for the benefit of a social and literary club such as were always drawing drafts upon his good nature and powers of entertaining. He yielded to their importunities on the principle that it was all he had to give in return for the many favors showered on him by such organizations.

I have never known Field in higher spirits than he was that night. His reading had been a wonderful success. It had gone off like a firecracker without burnt fingers, but with several humorous incidents of which he could make copy for "Sharps and Flats." And then he recited two or three things he had read to a circle of whose appreciation he was sure in advance. Next, what made that evening ever memorable, he sat down at the piano and caressed the keys with his sensitive fingers while he crooned the songs and told the stories of our earlier days, and we talked of the *Love Affairs* and his own affairs that were never brighter. No one who was present at that impromptu recital will forget his reading of "The Night Wind." With lights turned down, with ears attent, we listened so as not to lose a whisper of that deep voice that brought "the night that broods outside" into the darkened room with that weird and ghostly "Yoo ooo" of "The Night Wind."

Have you ever heard the wind go "Yoo ooo"?
'Tis a pitiful sound to hear!
It seems to chill you through and through
With a strange and speechless fear.
'Tis the voice of the night that broods outside
When folk should be asleep.
And many and many's the time I've cried
To the darkness brooding far and wide
Over the land and the deep:

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*"Whom do you want, O lonely night,
That you wail the long hours through?"
And the night would say in its ghostly way:*

*"Yooooo ooo!
Yooooo ooo!
Yooooo ooo!"*

It was long past midnight before Field insisted that I should accompany him to the last car from Evanston to Buena Park that night. And so we "walked and talked" as of old, and it only needed the presence of Dr. Reilly and Ed Cowen to complete the symposium of yore. As Field boarded the car and waved "God bless you, Nomp," it seemed as if ten years had been wiped off the record and we should meet at the office next morning. And so we parted.

A few more chapters were added to the *Love Affairs*. On Saturday morning, November 2d, Field's column in the morning *Record* concluded with a loyal defense of his old friend and associate "Bill" Nye from the suggestion of inebriety in connection with a riot at Paterson, N. J. Field traced the trouble to bad health and concluded with this warning to those in similar peril. "Only the utmost caution," he wrote, "and the most scrupulous observance of the rules laid down by his physician have enabled Nye to go ahead with his work. This work in itself is arduous. If there is anything more vexatious or more wearing than traveling about the country in all kinds of weather and at the mercy of railroads and lecture bureaus and hotel keepers, we do not know it." And yet at the moment Field was penning these words he, a more delicately organized invalid than Nye ever was, had his ticket bought and his trunk packed to leave for Kansas City, where he was billed for a reading on November 4th. On Saturday he felt too indisposed to leave his bed, but was strong enough to finish Chapter XIX of the *Love Affairs*. In the evening, feeling no better, he asked his brother Roswell to wire the manage-

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ment at Kansas City cancelling the engagement. Sunday evening he complained of a pain in his head, with some fever, and about half past ten Dr. Hedges was called in. He found the patient's temperature only slightly above normal, which he said was due to weakness and seeing too many visitors. To one of these who remarked that it was a perfect November day, Field said: "Yes, it is a lovely day, but this is the season of the year when things die, and this fine weather may mean death to a thousand people. We may hear of many deaths tomorrow."

After exchanging several stories, the doctor left, having assured Field that he was getting along all right and telling him that if it was fine on Monday it would do him good to get out and take some exercise. To an inquiry from Kansas City as to when he would be able to fulfil his engagement there, Field dictated the reply that he would come on November 16th. Then he wished everybody good night, turned over and was quickly lost in what appeared to be a peaceful and dreamless slumber.

Shortly before daylight the sleeper turned on his side and groaned. His son Daisy, who always slept with his father, spoke to him but got no answer. Then he reached over and touched him; but there was not the usual response of a word or a caress. In quick recognition of the awful messenger, Daisy alarmed the whole household with his cry, "Come quick! I believe papa is dead!"

Thus had Death stolen on Eugene Field as he slept. He lay in a natural untroubled position, his hands clasped over his heart, his head turned slightly to one side and his lips half parted, as if about to speak. As I wrote some twenty-five years ago, when the parting was fresh in my mind:

"It was just such a death as he had often said would be his choice. Just a dropping to sleep here and an awakening yonder."

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At The Door.

I thought myself indeed secure -
 So fast the door, so firm the lock -
 But lo! he toddling comes to lure
 My patient ear with timorous knocks.
 My heart were stone could it withstand
 The sweetness of my baby's falsetto -
 That timorous baby knocking and
 "Please let me in; it's only me."

*
 I threw the unfinished book,
 Regardless of its tempting charms,
 And, opening wide the door, I took
 My laughing darling in my arms.

Who knows but in Eternity
 I, like a waif child, shall wait
 The glories of a life to be
 Beyond the heavenly Father's gate?
 And will that heavenly Father heed
 The transient amplifying cry
 As at the outer door I plead
 "I'm I, O Father! only I?"

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* "Insert here the word 'aside'."

AT THE DOOR

The doctor said it was heart failure, resulting from a spasm of pain. On his face there was no trace of pain. The moan that startled Daisy was most likely that sigh

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that marks the passing of mortality into immortality! To my mind Field died as his father had of "physical exhaustion, a deterioration of the bodily organs and an incapacity on their part to discharge the vital functions—a wearing out of the machine before the end of the term for which its duration was designed."

And in the language of the Mallory he loved above Horace and Béranger, there was weeping in the Sabine Farm, and the greatest dole they made that ever man made and dolour out of measure. In knightly jousts with shield and spear Eugene Field would have been the unlikeliest man ever born of woman; but with his "sweet pen" he waged a lifelong battle for all things beautiful and true and of good report. His best songs are those that sing of mother's love and children, and the eternal bond between them. He scourged society with the "knotted lash of sarcasm" and defied the Foul Fiend of melancholy with the untamed effrontery of his mirth.

A touching and characteristic story has been made of an incident attending Field's funeral. Those who gathered at his house that day and looked upon the form of the "Good Knight" for the last time noticed a large white rose in one of his hands. On the preceding afternoon a friend of Field's who was ordering some flowers for the grave noticed the wistful face of a poorly clad little girl who had followed her into the florist's shop. Timidly the child asked:

"Are those flowers for Mr. Field? Oh, I wish I could send him just one. Won't you please, please, give me one flower?"

The florist placed a beautiful white rose in her hand. She thanked him, and turning gave it to the lady with the request: "Won't you please put it near Mr. Field with your flowers?" And so it came that the little girl's single rose—the gift of a child's love—was given the place of honor on that day when the body of the poet of childhood

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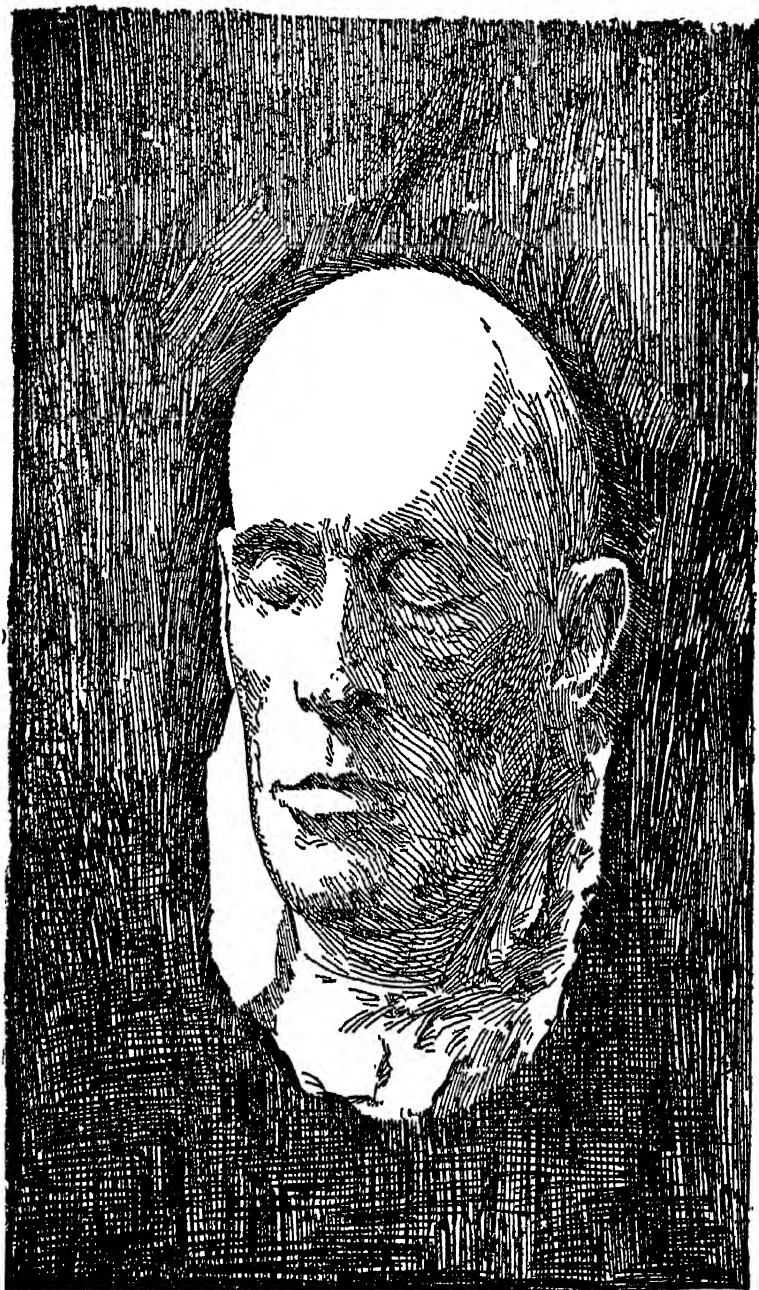
was committed to the plot of his Mother Earth he had selected in Graceland.

What was Eugene Field's religious belief I have often been asked, but I have searched his writings and my mind for a better answer than that of the language of his friend the Rev. Frank M. Bristol in his funeral address:

"I have said of my dear friend that he had a creed. His creed was love. He had a religion. His religion was kindness. He belonged to the church—the church of the common brotherhood of man. With all the changes that came to his definitions and formulas, he never lost from his heart of hearts the reverence for sacred things learned in childhood, and inherited from a sturdy Puritan ancestry. From that deep store of love and faith and reverence sprang the streams of his happy songs, and ever was he putting into his tender verses those ideas of the living God, the blessed Christ, the ministering angels of immortal love, the happiness of heaven, which were instilled into his heart when but a boy."

Eugene Field's funeral, the services for which took place in the old Fourth Presbyterian Church, corner of Rush and Superior Streets, where the building of the Methodist Book Concern now stands, was a memorable demonstration of the high regard in which he was held by all classes of citizens of Chicago. The Rev. Thomas C. Hall, who had succeeded Dr. Stryker as pastor of the Fourth Church, conducted the formal ceremonies. He was assisted by Dr. Bristol, who delivered the address from which a passage has just been quoted, and the Rev. Frank W. Gunsaulus, who embodied his tribute to his friend in a poem which passed in review many of the more noteworthy of Field's lyrics. The felicitous flavor of this poem can be judged from the opening stanzas:

*Midst rustling of leaves in the rich autumn air,
At eve when man's life is an unuttered prayer,*



DEATH MASK OF EUGENE FIELD

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*There came through the dusk, each with torch shining bright,
From far and from near, in his sorrow bedight,
The old earth's lone pilgrims o'er land and o'er wave,
Who gathered around their dear poet's grave.*

*With trumpet and drum, but in silence they came—
Their paths were illumined by their torches' mild flame,
Whose soft lambent streams by love's glory were lit;
And where fairy knights and bright elves used to flit
Across the wan world when the lights quivered dim,
These watched at the grave, and were mourning for him.*

In describing the last resting-place of Field's body in Graceland Cemetery twenty-five years ago, I wrote:

"It is a quiet spot where the poet is interred, in a lovely little glade, away from the sorrowful processions of the main driveways. Leafy branches wave above his grave, shielding it from the glare of the sun in summer and the rude sweep of the winds in winter. The birds flit across it from tree to tree, casting 'strange flutterin shadders' over the grave of him who loved them so well. And there, one day in the early summer another bird lover, Edward B. Clark, heard a woodthrush, the sweetest of American songsters, singing its vesper hymn and was moved out of his wonted prose to sing:

THE TRIBUTE OF THE THRUSH

*A bird voice comes from the maple
Across the green of the sod,
Breaking the silence of evening
That rests on this "acre of God."
'Tis the note of the bird of the woodland,
Of thickets and sunless retreats;
Yet the plashing of sunlit waters
Is the sound of the song it repeats.*

*Why sing you here in the open,
O gold-throated bird of the shade;
What spirit moves you to echo
This hymn from the angels strayed?*

THE CURTAIN FALLS

*And then as the shadows lengthened
The thrush made its answer clear:
"There was void in the world of music,
A singer lies voiceless here."*

But he lies there no longer. On the day I copy these lines, March 7, 1926, what remains of Eugene Field's earthly tabernacle has been transferred to a church close in Kenilworth, a suburb of Chicago, that never knew him and which he never knew. Happily after life's fitful fever it matters little where he rests if he only rests. Happily too, his works, to which we turn in the next chapter, have a touch of the immortal flame of genius that will not let them die.

CHAPTER XX

ESTIMATE OF HIS WORKS

THAT Eugene Field had a fixed consciousness that his pen had added something worth while to the literature of the world that would not perish with his parting breath, is clearly indicated in the dedication of his lyrics to his brother Roswell that precedes in facsimile the table of contents of the Sabine edition of *A Little Book of Western Verse*. Because of its unique form and because it reveals something of his attitude to his own writings, it may be quoted before attempting a general estimate of their worth. It may be entitled:

TO MY SWEET PEN

Pen: I have words to say that concern both thee and me. Oftentimes thou hast spoken for me; knowing my modesty, thou hast in kindness spoken for me, sometimes well and sometimes ill, but always in kindness, for thou art a sweet pen and I love thee passing well.

Pen: Thou hast been my companion a many years and thou hast served me diligently. Though I neglected thee, thou didst not chide me; though often I overburthened thee with labor, thou didst not complain. Thou hast been my patient servitor, my helper, my benefactor, my solace. When I was aweary thou didst refresh me. When I fared ill thou didst console me. When I was in sorrow thou didst soothe my grief.

But, sweet pen, the words I have to say are not of the love and gratitude I bear thee but rather of those children that have come out of the years that thou and I have done our task together. It is now the time when these children are to go forth into the world, and it behooveth us—thee and me—to acknowledge them to be our children and to give them our blessing withal. Some of these children are fairer than the others, but all are fair in our eyes, sweet pen, for they are ours and they shall speak for us when we are gone. That

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which is fairest in them is of thee and that which is not so fair is of me, for I am but an ill creature, whilst thou art a most sweet and a most fair pen, and a most delectable.

My pen: let us say to these children these words: "Go forth, little lyrics, and sing to the hearts of men. This beautiful world is full of song, and thy voices may not be heard of all—but sing on, children of ours, sing to the hearts of men and thy song shall at least swell the universal harmony that bespeaketh God's love and the sweetness of humanity!"

And, as you know right well, my pen, it hath ever been the custom with them that send such children into the world, to name them for some patron exalted in riches, in station and in power. Such a one do I know—rich in gracious feeling, high in the veneration of all hearts and mighty in the practices of charity. To him shall we dedicate this work of ours, that he may know, and all else who read these lines may know, too, that the valor, the virtue and the wisdom of his life are to stand henceforth as sponsor to these singing ones of ours.

Sweet pen, unto my brother, made dear to me not only by his countless acts of affection but also by a sense of my unworthiness of his devotion—to him let us dedicate these little lyrics; to him let us commit them tenderly but with the confidence that cometh of gratitude, reverence and love.

In penning this beautiful, touching and merited tribute his brother Roswell found among his papers after his death, Eugene had evidently forgotten his former dedication of the better part of these selfsame lyrics to Mary Field French, whose second verse reads thus:

*The mother's child you fostered then
Salutes you now and bids you take
These little children of his pen
And love them for the author's sake.*

But it serves the purpose of a proem to all the lyrics within the boards of his other books from the *Tribune Verse*, 1881-83, to his latest lullaby in 1895. The proem of 1889 ran:

Go, little book; and if any one would speak thee ill, let him
bethink him that thou art the child of
one who loves thee well.

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There is no mistaking here the touch of the same "sweet pen" apostrophized above, and what a vast volume of lyrics, poems, tales and paragraphs that pen poured forth in its riot of sweetness and satire, song, story and unfettered frolic of thirteen years; and through those prolific years it is hard to say which engaged popular attention most, the man or his works. The fact remains; the man has passed the way of all flesh, his works—at least a goodly proportion of them—survive and are a part of the rich store of English literature that can never die. Some day a careful gleaner will go through the entire mass of Eugene Field's writings and separate the wheat from the chaff, the pure gold from the ephemeral dross, to give the world in a single volume the verses that are worthy of "The Poet of Childhood."

In his *The Eugene Field I Knew*, written some thirty years ago, Francis Wilson, who vied with Sol Smith Russell in close and intimate association with Field, thus attempted to forecast his final place in the field of letters:

It is too early to determine what place if any the evolution of our literature will assign to Eugene Field. . . . As far as can be judged from a wholly popular point of view, "A Little Book of Western Verse" will dwell longest in the hearts and minds of the multitude.

It is more nearly representative of Field's powers than any other single volume. It contains examples of his dialect poems, paraphrases, translations and adaptations from Horace, Chaucer, Spenser, Hugo, Béranger, Heine, occasional verses and "Little Boy Blue," a poem which more than anything else he ever wrote brought him into popular favor. It also contains many of his tenderest lullabies, which have endeared him to the mothers and children of the land. In this book also are some of the finest and most humorous of Field's poems on books and book lovers, and from these considerations the volume is not unlikely to outlive all the others.

Mr. Wilson says that Field thought otherwise and set down the *Echoes from the Sabine Farm* as possessing more of the elements that fitted them for immortality. After the lapse of one generation and the birth of another

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that knew not the man behind the verses, it appears that the judgment of the actor was better than that of the author, as is often the case. For obvious reasons, the *Little Book of Western Verse* remains the volume by which Field is judged and by which his memory is kept green. If it contained but one leaf and on that leaf was printed the three verses of "Little Boy Blue," Eugene Field would be sure of immortality. And this is not because it was the best poem he ever wrote or the first or last in which he played with exquisite tenderness on the heartstrings of "Rachel weeping for her children," but because the three words of the title seem to sum up the tragedy, the pain, the wonder of Death taking the innocent and leaving the parents the mystery of

*What has become of our Little Boy Blue
Since he kissed them and put them there?*

Field wrote many better poems than "Little Boy Blue," and his first *Little Book of Western Verse* is rich and compact of them, but it alone is unapproached enthroned in popular favor. Like the songs of the Man of Airrie, it is read and sung in the homes of all lands that know the English tongue. By a happy chance the original manuscript bears the interpolation in my handwriting of the four words,

What has become of

thus identifying it forever. After being in my possession for nearly thirty years, this most precious piece of Fieldiana was donated to be sold at the Bazaar for the benefit of the Allies of the Great War, in January, 1917. After spirited bidding, it was bought by Mr. John McCormack for \$2400. He subsequently sang it into a victrola record, adding to the sentiment of the poet the mellow richness of his wonderful tenor voice. There is therefore no probability that "Little Boy Blue" will lose its place in the hearts and memories

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of the mothers and children of America. Nor will it fail of its emotional effect on the thoughts of the fathers of the land. Its mere penmanship is so exquisitely perfect that it loses nothing in facsimile reproduction.

AN AMERICAN YORICK

Looking for the best literary and critical judgment of the permanent value of Eugene Field's work at the time of his death, the reader has no need to go beyond the brief paper contributed by Edmund Clarence Stedman to the *Souvenir Book* of the *New York Hebrew Fair* in December, 1895, the month after Field's death. For many years Mr. Stedman was the undisputed Dean of Letters on this side of the Atlantic. His *Victorian Anthology* (1895) and *American Anthology* (1900) merely rounded out the long list of his contributions to the poetical literature of America. As a critical judge of verse he had a rare mixture of high ideals and human sympathy. He was just the judge Eugene Field would have chosen, just as he was the friend he put to the severest test by one of his most tantalizing jokes, which is told in modified baldness in the following tribute, which was entitled,

ALAS, POOR YORICK

In paying a tribute to the mingled mirth and tenderness of Eugene Field—the poet of whose going the West may say, "He took our daylight with him," one of his fellow journalists has written that he was a jester, but not of the kind that Shakespeare drew in Yorick. He was not only—so the writer implied—the maker of jibes and fantastic devices, but the bard of friendship and affection, of melodious lyrical conceits; he was the laureate of children, dear for his "Wynken, Blynken and Nod" and "Little Boy Blue"; the scholarly book-lover, withal, who relished and paraphrased his Horace, who wrote with delight a quaint archaic English of his special devising, who collected rare books, and brought out his own "Little Books" of "Western Verse" and "Profitable Tales" in high-priced limited editions, with

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broad margins of paper that moths and rust do not corrupt, but which tempt bibliomaniacs to break through and steal.

For my own part, I would select Yorick as the very forecast, in imaginative literature, of our various Eugene. Surely Shakespeare conceived the "mad rogue" of Elsinore as made up of grave and gay, of wit and gentleness, and not as a mere clown or "jig maker." It is true that when Field put on his cap and bells, he too was "wont to set the table on a roar," as the feasters at a hundred tables from "Casey's Table d'Hote" to the banquets of the opulent East now rise to testify. But Shakespeare plainly reveals, concerning Yorick, that mirth was not his sole attribute,—that his motley covered the sweetest nature and the tenderest heart. It could be no otherwise with one who loved and comprehended childhood and whom children loved. And what does Hamlet say? "He hath borne me upon his back a thousand times. . . . Here hung those lips that I have kissed I know not how oft!" Of what is he thinking but of his boyhood, before doubts and contemplations wrapped him in the shadow, and when in his young grief or frolic the gentle Yorick, with his jest, his "excellent fancy," and his songs and gambols, was his comrade?

Of all moderns, then, here or in the old world, Eugene Field seems to be most like the survival, or revival, of the ideal jester of knightly times; as if Yorick himself were reincarnated, or as if a superior bearer of the bauble at the court of Italy, or of France, or of English King Hal, had come to life again—as much out of time as Twain's Yankee at the Court of Arthur; but not out of place, for he fitted himself as aptly to his folk and region as Puck to the fays and mortals of a wood near Athens. In the days of divine sovereignty, the jester, we see, was by all odds the wise man of the palace; the real fools were those he made his butt—the foppish pages, the obsequious courtiers, the swaggering guardsmen, the insolent nobles, and not seldom majesty itself. And thus it is that painters and romancers have loved to draw him. Who would not rather be Yorick than Osric, or Touchstone than Le Beau, or even poor Bertuccio than one of his brutal maskers? Was not the redoubtable Chicot, with his sword and brains, the true ruler of France? To come to the jesters of history—which is so much less real than fiction—what laurels are greener than those of Triboulet, and Will Somers, and John Heywood—dramatist and master of the king's merry interludes? Their shafts were feathered with mirth and song, but pointed with wisdom, and well might old John Trussell say "That it often happens that wise counsel is more sweetly followed when it is tempered with folly, and earnest is the less offensive if it be delivered in jest."

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Yes, Field "caught on" to his time—a complex American, with the obstreperous *bizarrierie* of the frontier and the artistic delicacy of our oldest culture always at odds within him—but he was, above a child of nature, a frolic incarnate, and just as he would have been in any time and country. Fortune had given him that unforgettable mummer's face,—that clear cut, mobile visage,—that animated natural mask! No one else had so deep and rich a voice for the rendering of the music and pathos of a poet's lines, and no actor ever managed both face and voice better than he in delivering his own verses, merry or sad. One night, he was seen among the audience at "Uncut Leaves," and was instantly requested to do something towards the evening's entertainment. As he was not in evening dress, he refused to take the platform, but stood up in the lank length of an ulster, from his corner seat, and recited "Dibden's Ghost" and "Two Opinions" in a manner that blighted the chances of the readers that came after him. It is true that no clown ever equalled the numbers and lawlessness of his practical jokes. Above all, every friend that he had—except the Dean of his profession (Mr. Dana) for whom he did exhibit unbounded and filial reverence—was soon or late a victim of his whimsicality, or else justly distrusted the measure of Field's regard for him. Nor was the friendship perfected until one bestirred himself to pay Eugene back in kind. As to this, I am only one of scores now speaking from personal experience. There seemed to be no doubt in his mind that the victim of his fun, even when it outraged common sensibilities, *must* enjoy it as much as he. Who but Eugene, after being the welcome guest, at a European capital, of one of our most ambitious and refined ambassadors, would have written a lyric, sounding the praises of a German "onion pie," ending each stanza with

Ach, Liebe! Ach, mein Gott!

and would have printed it in America, with his host's initials affixed!

My own matriculation at Eugene's College of Unreason was in this wise. In 1887 Mr. Ben Ticknor, the Boston publisher, was complaining that he needed some new and promising authors to enlarge his book list. The New York *Sun* and *Tribune* had been copying Field's rhymes and prose extravaganzas, the former often very charming, the latter the broadest satire of Chicago life and people. I suggested to Mr. Ticknor that he should ask the poet-humorist to collect for publication in book form from the choicest of his writings thus far. To make the story brief, Mr. Field did so, and the outcome—at which I was somewhat taken aback, was the remarkable book,

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"Culture's Garlands," with its title imitated from the sentimental "Annuals" of long ago, and its cover ornamented with sausages linked together as a coronal wreath. The symbol certainly fitted the greater part of the contents, which ludicrously scored Chicago culture of that time, and made Pullman, Armour and other commercial magnates of the Lakeside city special types in illustration. All this has its use, and many of the sufferers long since became the *farceur's* devoted friends. The *Fair* showed the country what Chicago really was and is. Certainly there is no other American city where the richest class appear so enthusiastic with respect to art and literature. "The practice of virtue makes men virtuous," and even if there was some pretence and affectation in the culture of ten years ago, it has resulted in as high standards of taste as can elsewhere be found. Moreover if our own "four hundred" had even affected, or made it the fashion to be interested in whatever makes for real culture, the intellectual life of this metropolis would not now be so far apart from the "social swim." There were scattered through "Culture's Garland" not a few of Field's delicate bits of verse. In some way he found that I had instigated Mr. Ticknor's request, and, although I was thinking solely of the publisher's interests, he expressed unstinted gratitude. Soon afterwards I was delighted to receive from him a quarto parchment "breviary" containing a dozen ballads, long and short, engrossed in his exquisitely fine handwriting and illuminated with colored borders and drawings by the poet himself. It must have required days for the mechanical execution, and certainly I would not now exchange it for its weight in diamonds. This was the way our friendship began. It was soon strengthened by meetings and correspondence, and never afterward broken.

Mr. Stedman then relates the final test to which that friendship was subjected by one of Field's rawest practical jokes. As this was characteristic of the liberty Field took in making "copy" at the expense of his best friends, it may be told here in greater detail than as given by Mr. Stedman. It becoming known that Mr. Stedman was to be the guest of the Twentieth Century Club of Chicago on Tuesday evening, April 29, 1891, with what might be termed "ghoulish glee," Field announced his coming in his column after this fashion:

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Chicago literary circles are all agog over the prospective visit of Mr. Edmund Clarence Stedman, the eminent poet-critic. At the regular monthly conclave of the Robert Browning Benevolent and Patriotic Association of Cook County, night before last, it was resolved to invite Mr. Stedman to a grand complimentary banquet at the Kinslays on Wednesday evening, the 29th. Prof. William Morton Payne, grand marshal of the parade which is to conduct the famous guest from the railway station the morning he arrives, tells us that the procession will be in this order:

TWENTY POLICE OFFICERS AFOOT
THE GRAND MARSHAL, HORSEBACK, ACCOMPANIED BY TEN
MALE MEMBERS OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY CLUB,
ALSO HORSEBACK.
MR. STEDMAN IN A LANDAU DRAWN BY FOUR HORSES
TWO BLACK AND TWO WHITE
THE TWENTIETH CENTURY CLUB IN CARRIAGES
A BRASS BAND AFOOT
THE ROBERT BROWNING CLUB IN FRANK PARMELEE'S
'BUSES
THE HOMER CLUBS AFOOT, PRECEDED BY A FIFE-AND-DRUM
CORPS AND A REAL GREEK PHILOSOPHER
ATTIRED IN A TUNIC.
ANOTHER BRASS BAND,
A BEAUTIFUL YOUNG WOMAN PLAYING A GUITAR, SYM-
BOLIZING APOLLO AND HIS LUTE IN A CAR DRAWN
BY NINE MILK WHITE STALLIONS IMPER-
SONATING THE MUSES.
TWO HUNDRED CHICAGO POETS AFOOT,
THE CHICAGO LITERARY CLUB IN CARRIAGES
A SPLENDID GILDED CHARIOT BEARING GUNTHER'S SHAKE-
SPEARE AUTOGRAPH AND MR. ELLSWORTH'S FIRST
PRINTED BOOK.
ANOTHER BRASS BAND.
MAGNIFICENT ADVERTISING CAR OF ARMOUR & Co.,
ILLUSTRATING THE PROGRESS OF CIVILIZATION.
THE FISHBLADDER BRIGADE AND THE BLUE ISLAND
AVENUE SHELLEY CLUB.
THE FIRE DEPARTMENT,
ANOTHER BRASS BAND,
CITIZENS IN CARRIAGES, AFOOT AND HORSEBACK,
ADVERTISING CARS AND WAGONS.

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The line of march will be an extensive one, taking in the packing houses and other notable points. At Mr. Armour's interesting professional establishment the process of slaughtering will be illustrated for the delectation of the honored guest, after which an appropriate poem will be read by Decatur Jones, President of the Lake View Elite Club. Then Mr. Armour will entertain a select few at a champagne luncheon in the scalding room.

In high literary circles it is rumored that the Rev. F. M. Bristol has got an option on all autographs that Mr. Stedman may write during his stay in Chicago. Much excitement has been caused by this, and there is talk of an indignation meeting in Battery D, to be addressed by the Rev. Flavius Gunsaulus, the Rev. Frank W. Brobst, and other eminent speakers."

To resume the quotation from Mr. Stedman's article:

I have no doubt that Eugene thought I would enjoy this kind of advertisement as heartily as he did. If so, he lacked the gift of putting himself in the other man's place. But his sardonic face, a-grin like a schoolboy's, was one with two others which shone upon me when I did reach Chicago, and my pride was not wounded sufficiently to prevent me from enjoying the restaurant luncheon to which he bore me off in triumph. I did promise to square accounts with him in time, and this is how I fulfilled my word. The next year, at a meeting of a suburban "Society of Authors," a certain lady-journalist was chaffed as to her acquaintanceship with Field, and accused of addressing him as "Gene." At this she took umbrage, saying, "It's true we worked together on the same paper for five years, but he was always a perfect gentleman. I *never* called him 'Gene.' " This was reported by the press, and gave me the refrain for a skit entitled "Katherine and Eugenio":

*Five years she sate a-near him
Within that type-strewn loft;
She handed him the paste-pot,
He passed the scissors oft;
She dipped in the same inkstand
That crowned their desk between,
Yet he never called her Katie,
She never called him "Gene."*

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*Though close—ah! close—the droplight
That classic head revealed,
She was to him Miss Katherine,
He—naught but Mr. Field;
Decorum graced his upright brow
And thinned his lips serene,
And, though he wrote a poem each hour,
Why should she call him "Gene."*

*She gazed at his sporadic hair—
She knew his hymns by rote;
They longed to dine together
At Casey's table d'hôte;
Alas, that Fortune's "hostages"—
But let us draw a screen!
He dared not call her Katie,
How could she call him "Gene"?*

When Field was smitten with pneumonia there was an intimate exchange of letters between him and Mr. Stedman, during which Field sent a set of first editions of Stedman's works he had picked up, with a request that they be autographed on their flyleaves. This was most gladly done; and on one of the volumes Stedman wrote this little quatrain:

TO EUGENE FIELD

*Death thought to claim you in this year of years,
But Fancy cried—and raised her shield between—
Still let men weep, and smile amid their tears;
Take any two beside, but spare Eugene!*

Such was Clarence's last fitting message to Eugene. In the concluding paragraph to his contribution to the *Souvenir Book* in 1895, Mr. Stedman gave this happily expressed estimate of Field's work:

Eugene Field was so mixed a compound that it will always be impossible quite to decide whether he was wont to judge critically of either his own conduct or his literary creations. As to the latter, he put the worst and the best side by side, and apparently cared alike

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for both. That he did much beneath his standard, fine and true at times—is unquestionable, and many a set of verses went the rounds that harmed his reputation. On the whole, I think this was due to the fact that he got his stated income as a newspaper poet and jester, and had to furnish his score of “Sharps and Flats” with more or less regularity. For all this, he certainly has left pieces, compact of the rarer elements, sufficient in number to preserve for him a unique place among America’s most original characters, scholarly wits and poets of brightest fancy. Yorick is no more. But his genius will need no chance upturning of the grave-turf for its remembrance. When all is sifted, its fame is more likely to strengthen than decline.

SIFTING THE SHARPS FROM THE FLATS

Time, which carries no blossoms for mistakes, has approved the judgment of the poet-critic of the last century. Eugene’s fame, resting on the fine and true in what he wrote, is more secure today than it was when Mr. Stedman wrote these discriminating lines, but the sifting process is still going on. The complex nature of the man and the infinite variety of his work, to say nothing of its enormous volume, has rendered the task of separating the sharps from the flats of what he wrote extremely difficult and the verdict in a great degree unconvincing. I do not agree at all with Mr. Stedman’s theory that the unevenness in the literary value of what Field wrote was due to his getting his stated income for his newspaper work as “poet and jester.” It is scarcely possible to conceive of Eugene Field getting anywhere as a casual contributor to the newspapers or periodicals of the period of his greatest productivity, 1878-1890. Without the incentive to feed the “hostages” heaven sent him before he came to Chicago, there is little likelihood that his vagrant, almost vagabond, fancy would have carried him far up the steep grade that led to the enduring place he won in the hearts of all classes of his countrymen.

If any readers are inclined to share with eastern ad-

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mirers of Eugene Field the wish that he could have been spared the grind and "stated income" of daily journalism to devote his time and strength to higher forms of literature, let them read the experiences of Bret Harte told in his letters to "Nan," his wife, of the hardships and humiliations attending the freedom to write on the doorstep of the poorhouse 365 days a year for the best years of his life. Necessity may be and doubtless has been the mother of many imaginations, but she is a barren handed step-mother to dyspeptic author or artist. The journalistic reed upon which Eugene Field leaned for twenty years never pierced his hand nor embittered his spirit, as freedom from regular employment did the later years of the author of the "Luck of Roaring Camp."

Eugene Field's place in the "Valhalla" of English or American literature is to be settled by what he wrote and not by how he wrote. His life as told in these pages is an interesting human document revealing the manner of man he was and the environment out of which he produced an extraordinary volume of comment on the men and times with which he was familiar; but no one equally familiar with what he wrote can fail to note and comprehend that throughout it all he worshipped at one shrine, that of motherhood. The songs he wove about children and childhood that won him fame were the reflex of what William Winter has so happily called "that mysterious tie a mother bears."

As Eugene Field's vogue in life and living reputation now rest almost entirely on his verse, it is in it we must seek for the secret of both. The collection of his verse contributed to the *Denver Tribune* in 1881-1883 testifies to his early adoption of the one theme that was to run like a thread of gold through all his verse from "Christmas Treasures," first written in 1878 and reprinted on December 25, 1891, down to his latest lullaby. In the earlier poem the reader will find the germ of "Little Boy Blue."

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*A little sock, a little toy—
A little lock of golden hair—
The Christmas music on the air—
A-watching for my baby boy.*

This picture was never far distant from Eugene Field's "sweet pen" when Christmas tide rolled round. There was always a "vacant chair" in the home circle of which he sang so sweetly, and the voice of "Rachel for her children crying" is heard crooning its universal longing for "the touch of a vanished hand" through the best lines he ever wrote.

From that eventful morn in March, 1878, when to the poet there was born "a son and heir," he sang of babies, birthdays and the lonesome little shoes that mothers cherished in the secret chambers of their homes and hearts. But through them all ran that strange oblique quality that Mr. Stedman noted that made verse-fellows of the daintiest sentiments and the most heartless rhymes. For instance, on opposite pages of this rag bag of Field's early verse I find:

A LULLABY

*Go, little darling, go,
Nod, nodding to Bye-low.
The snow white sheep
Are fast asleep
In such a pretty row,
All in the sweet Bye-low;
Then go, my darling, go.*

September 11th, 1881

BABY'S COLD

*Back from off his fevered temples
Brush his straggling locks of gold,
Hear his deep stentorious breathing.
Little darling's caught a cold.
Hasten, get the soapstone heated,
Place it at his chubby toes,
Speed thee for the mutton tallow,
Grease the little darling's nose.*

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Through two hundred and fifty pages such mismated bits of rhyme run, with only an occasional oasis to give promise of better things in the by and by. What is more remarkable is that with all the evident felicity of versification there is scarcely a hint or suggestion of anything but the most threadbare literary allusion. It may be a poor thing, or a gem of purest ray serene, but poor or fine it carries Field's earmark. Even where he pens an "Ode to Mæcenas" there is nothing Horatian about the lines where, after denouncing those who "exchange their principles for gold," he continues :

*Let these disport them as they may,
But I, throughout the livelong day,
Nurture the spark of heavenly fire,
Invoke the muse and strike the liar;
Skim up and down the winding street,
Pump items out of those I meet,
Record the murders, runaways,
The fights, the thefts, and every phase
Of life in country or in town
I jot upon my tablets down;
Three flights of stairs, three times a day,
I upward wend my weary way;
From early morn till dewey night
I write and toil, and toil and write,
And, Mæcenas, I would choose
To thus pay worship to the muse.*

"CULTURE'S GARLAND"

Before, at the instigation of Mr. Stedman, Messrs. Ticknor & Company offered Field the chance to put some of his writing between boards, he had published enough verses and stories of a quality to justify his friend's recommendation. The first and only edition of *Culture's Garland* was printed in June, 1887. Before that date in Denver, or earlier, and in Chicago, Field had published "A Brook Song," "Christmas Treasures," "The Wanderer," "The Little Peach," "Once upon a Time," "The Wimmin," "The

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Saucy Boy Penitent," "Mamma's Valentine," "Winfreda," "The Princess Ming," "The Cricket's Song," "A Fairy Lullaby," "The Divine Lullaby," "Contentment" ("The Old Red Hen"), and "Hi Spy," to mention only a few of the best known of his happy songs, to say nothing of the numerous *jeux d'esprits* he had scattered all along his mirthful way. There was no earthly reason or object in putting off on Mr. Ticknor such a medley as he did except Shylock's answer that it was his humor. And yet *Culture's Garland* is a pretty fair representation of the average composition of his daily column of "Sharps and Flats," which, it must be remembered, was written for daily consumption—"at the breakfast table in the morning, in the waste basket in the evening," as Murat Halstead used to say of his own paper, the *Cincinnati Commercial*, which is in oblivion today. As a riotous lampoon on the passing phases of mushroom society and shallow literary pretenders, it showed with what grace and vigor Field could wield his barbless "sweet pen."

THE FIRST "LITTLE BOOKS"

But it was a different Field that undertook the selection of material for *A Little Book of Western Verse* and *A Little Book of Profitable Tales*. Here we (and as the publisher of these two most precious books, I will be pardoned for the plural designation) took warning from the cool reception of *Culture's Garland*, and determined that these books should contain the best that Field had written up to that time. The *Second Book of Verse*, issued some three years later, itself a worthy representation of Field's poetical versatility, is the best evidence of the exacting standard we applied to the first, for among its most popular numbers will be found verses written prior to 1889, the year of the publication of the *Little Books*. The manner of their publication is a story of itself. Having decided to make them specimens of the best bookmaking

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possible with American type, paper and presswork, but with inexpensive binding and no cost of publication, we solicited subscriptions from his personal friends at ten dollars apiece, each subscription to cover two sets and none to be offered for sale. The response was prompt and generous. It quickly exceeded our limit and many had to be regretfully turned away. The spirit of these subscriptions was echoed in the "Certainly! and glad of the chance," from Stuart Robson, who had often been unmercifully guyed in "Sharps and Flats," and in Victor F. Lawson's personal note to me saying, "If you run short on this scheme, I shall be glad to increase my subscription whenever advised that it is needed."

As was to be expected, a majority of the shares were taken in Chicago. Denver came next, and then Kansas City, for Eugene Field was a name to conjure by in those cities then, as it has continued to be. Comparatively few shares were taken in the East, where Field's fame had not gained anything through *Culture's Garland's* misinterpretation. But the names of Charles A. Dana, Whitelaw Reid and Field's "Cousin Kate" adorned the list. Field's stage friends responded nobly and numerous, as did journalists and railway officials, among whom he was a great favorite. Looking back, there was a notable scarcity of bibliomaniacs in the list, which is easily accounted for by the fact that in 1889 Eugene Field had not become the high priest and tormentor of the ancient and honorable "Saints and Sinners" from Market Street, San Francisco, to High Holborn, London. They have been picking up these *Little Books* at all sorts of prices ever since, which must afford Field unholy glee wherever his spirit abides.

As soon as the subscription was closed, with an even \$1,000 in the bank, we opened negotiations with John Wilson & Son of Cambridge, Mass., and finally accepted their estimate of \$976.00 for the job, which was exactly \$249.00 more than it would have been had not Field in-

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sisted on hand-made deckle-edge paper at 60 cents a pound—and paper was much cheaper then than now. Even so we had to sacrifice a steel engraving of Field by the American Note Company, for which he had specially sat. Nothing in his career pleased Field more than the manner and making of these *Little Books*. He had his own way about every step in their preparation and publication, and then, thoroughly satisfied after reading the proof, sailed for Europe, leaving me to number and initial the precious copies. And so it comes that my handwriting testifies to the original *Little Books* as it had to the original of "Little Boy Blue."

These *Little Books* contained not only the best of what Field had written up to that time, but the best he ever wrote. This is more particularly true of the *Little Book of Western Verse*, which while containing the trilogy of his child poems, "Little Boy Blue," "Krinken" and "Wynken, Blynkin and Nod," and the sweetest of his musical, sleep-inducing lullabies, apostrophizing "The Lonesome Little Shoe":

*Sweet little fairy,
Tender and airy,
Come, let us dance on the good baby-eyes,
Merrily skipping,
Cheerily tripping,
Murmur we ever our soft lullabies.*

in sharp antithesis with versicles of "The Little Peach" order, also included the cleverest of his paraphrases of Horace, Béranger and Heine. More indicative still of Field's mastery of poetical expression, the remarkable circle of dialect poems beginning with Casey's Table d'Hôte and including Marthy's Younkit, gave to the collection the masculine strain that justified the Western in its title—the masculine strain that was so distinctly missing in his verses written after his return from Europe. Moreover, in the *Little Book of Western Verse* will be found the first humorous outcroppings of Field's whimsical musings on the joys

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and frailties of the collector's experiences, "The Bibliomaniac's Prayer" and "The Bibliomaniac's Bride." It is passing strange that bibliophiles ever took the author of the former seriously. Apparently they never suspected the mocking spirit behind the prayer:

*Direct me in some godly walk
Which leads away from bookish strife,
That I with pious deed and talk
May extra illustrate my life.*

The *Little Book of Western Verse* also contained the two examples of how Field not exactly spoiled but seriously impaired the poetic spirit of his favorite poems by overelaborating them. He rewrote "Madge: Ye Hoyden" and "Yvytot" at least half a dozen different times and each time the result was less satisfactory. In sending a rough draft of "Yvytot" to Cowen he declared it to be "the only purely fanciful ballad I have ever written." He had the same fate with his purely fanciful—by which he meant imaginative—tales, of which "The Werewolf" is a striking example. The more he rewrote it the more labored it appeared, and yet he was singularly attached to these wayward children of his "sweet pen."

THE "PROFITABLE TALES"

Although it is probable that Eugene Field spent twice as much time and study on the tales in the three volumes devoted to them as on all his verse, they have not stood the corroding touch of time with anything like the persistence of his verse. The reason is simple. From his earliest adventure with his "sweet pen," which was always the finest manufactured, verse and rhymed verse at that was his natural medium of expression. He did not have to learn how to "lisp in numbers"—the rhythm of appropriately chosen words was music to his mind as well as to

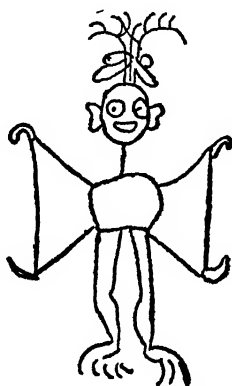
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his accurately attuned ear. And so the words dropped into their places in the swinging line without hesitation. Not so his prose. He labored hard to master the singular archaic style of which he became a master. For his daily grind in the *Morning News* it was admirably effective. It had a novelty that was a surprise to newspaper readers and the tales were complete in a column. Read too continuously Field's tales lost this charm of novelty and, having no continuing plot or story, palled upon all but the select circle that reads for the style alone. There are some ten or a dozen of these "Little Tales" in which the meat of a real magazine story is condensed into the two thousand odd words of an agate column, which ought to be grouped in one little book. They will be found scattered through the three volumes, but no two judges would choose the same tales. Probably all would unite on "The Robin and the Violet," "Margaret, a Pearl," "Ezra's Thanksgivin' out West," "Bill, the Lokil Editor" and "The Cyclopedy" and, for sentimental reasons, "The First Christmas Tree," from the first book of *Tales*; "Humin Natur' on the Han'bul 'nd St. Jo," "The Jinin' Farms," "Death and the Soldier" and "The Story of Xantippe," from the *Second Book of Tales*; and "The Holy Cross," "Methuselah," "Mistress Merciless" and "The Lonesome Little Shoe" from the *Third Book of Tales* under the title "The Holy Cross." It is worthy of note that "The Lonesome Little Shoe," which concludes the last of these books of tales, and which is one of the prettiest stories Field ever wrote, must have been written early in the 80's, because it contains such familiar verses as "The Cricket's Song," "Contentment, or The Old Red Hen" and "A Fairy Lullaby," known to have been written previous to 1887. It is also enlivened with "Coquetry," in which "The flea ran away with the bug-a-boo" and "The Fate of the Flimflam," in which once more Field perpetrated one of his characteristic frolics in verse:

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*A flimflam flopped from a fillamaloo,
Where the pollywog pinkled so pale,
And the pipkin piped a petulant "Pook"
To the garrulous gawp of the gale.
"Oh, woe to the swap of the sweeping swipe
That booms on the bobbling bay!"
Snickered the snark to the snoozing snipe
That lurked where the lamprey lay.*

That there may be no mistake as to the fatherhood of this poem, the printer will please insert here a handmade



THE FLUBDUB

From a drawing by Eugene Field.

drawing of the flubdub, first cousin to the flimflam, by Eugene Field, whose fancy created both.

"THE HOUSE" AND "THE LOVE AFFAIRS"

During the last year of his life Eugene Field wrote two stories that are real contributions to the shelves of literature—"The House" and *The Love Affairs of a Bibliomaniac*. The former is a moving tale of the experience of a man of Field's own condition and means struggling with the fardels he has to bear from the contractor, the carpenter, the painter and the plumber when he undertakes

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to build a home for himself. In its first chapter is told that the first wish of Alice (it might better have been Julia) was "that we should some time be rich enough to be able to build a dear little house for ourselves." From that point on, with the substitution of Julia for Alice and Eugene for Reuben, the reader can cherish the dear delusion that he or she is a spectator or auditor of all that went on in and about the acquisition of the lot and the building of the home on Clarendon Avenue, Chicago, all in due time to be named "The Sabine Farm," wherever its beloved owner, builder and farmer in the field of letters is known. For the twelve years of his residence in Chicago moving from pillar to post in rented quarters, the vision of this house of his own was not long absent from his thoughts. He was always confident that the time would come when he would sit under his own vine and fig tree with no landlord to make him afraid. But the reader must not accept everything Field says in "The House" as gospel truth, as the over-credulous of his admirers have of parts of his *Auto-Analysis*. Everywhere the truth is embellished and enriched with its passage through his fanciful brain. And nowhere has the exact truth been permitted to clog the free wings of his fancy. With due allowance for Field's inveterate inclination to cater to the gullibility of the average reader, "The House" can be taken as a free-hand picture of the concluding year of its writer's life and as such the concluding chapter of these annals of the Good Knight sans Peur et sans Monnaie.

"THE LOVE AFFAIRS OF A BIBLIOMANIAC"

Not so the "Love Affairs," the central feature of which is not personal but the idiosyncrasies of a class on the outskirts of which Field delighted to flutter, like a humming bee about a flowering honeysuckle bush, occasionally darting into the maniac circle to replenish his stock of stories for the re-

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freshment of his readers. To those whose ways it extra-illustrates with sympathetic pen pictures, the *Love Affairs* is a mirror of self-conscious charm. In its fascinating pages they believe they see their individual characteristics mirrored, not as in a glass darkly but in the revealing light of a kindred lover of the autographed page or the fragment of a shattered idol. It opens with what promises to be a semi-veracious autobiography. One of its introductory paragraphs reads:

I am in no sense a hero. For many, many years I have walked in a pleasant garden, enjoying sweet odors and soothing spectacles; no predetermined itinerary has controlled my course; I have wandered whither I pleased, and very many times I have strayed so far into the tanglewood and thickets as almost to have lost my way. And now it is my purpose to walk that pleasant garden once more, inviting you to bear me company and to share with me what satisfaction may accrue from an old man's return to old-time places and old-time loves.

It is not the intention here to accept the tempting invitation to follow Field on the delightful wanderings in which he soon lost himself in the tanglewood of fancy and the thickets of crowding memories. In the credible features the *Love Affairs* follow in corroborative fashion the tale told in these pages, illumined and transmuted by the art of his pen into literature. It contained two characters that enrich that field—Judge Methuen and Dr. O'Rell. The former has never been identified and seemingly is a composite of all Field's intimate friends, whose advice he was constantly seeking and seldom taking; the latter is our common friend Dr. Frank W. Reilly, very thinly veiled and not at all disguised under the fictitious title. The story is enlivened with such snatches of song as this:

*Away wi' carking care and gloom
That make life's pathway weedy O!
A cheerful glass makes flowers to bloom
And lightsome hours fly speedy O!*

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And Judge Methuen, the interesting composite of the *Affairs*, is credited with a seven stanza poem to Boccaccio, the fifth stanza running:

*And still I love that brown old book
I found upon the topmost shelf—
I love it so I let none look
Upon the treasure but myself!
And yet I have a strapping boy
Who (I have every cause to know)
Would to its full extent enjoy
The friendship of Boccaccio.*

The *Love Affairs* is the nearest approach Field ever made to do his best work after he was a grandfather, a hope he never tired of uttering from its first appearance in his *Auto-Analysis*. "I believe that, if I live, I shall do my best literary work when I am a grandfather." This was merely applying to himself a mirthful question he was never tired of pinning on Modjeska. "When, Madame," he would ask, "are we to have the pleasure of seeing you as Juliet?" To which he would make reply for her, "When I am a grandmother."

From the time Field went to Europe in search of health, he knew that the old vitality was missing—that, in more modern terms, all the cylinders were not hitting fire with the same accuracy as of yore. He faced what the doctors told him and his own weariness verified, that there was no virtue in the waters this side of Jordan that could give relief and nourishment to his impaired digestion. He had the warning of how his father had died prematurely from the same failure of nutrition, told in his uncle Charles' memoir of his brother.

He (Roswell, Sr.) [it ran] was averse to active exercise and for some years before his death he lived a life of studious seclusion which would have been philosophical had he not violated, in the little care he took of his health, one of the most important lessons which philos-

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ophy teaches. At a comparatively early age he died of physical exhaustion, a deterioration of the bodily organs, and an incapacity on their part to discharge the vital functions—a wearing out of the machine before the end of the term for which its duration was designed. He was eminently qualified to serve, as well as to adorn, society, and in all likelihood he would have found in a greater variety of occupation some relief from the monotonous strain under which his energies prematurely gave way.

Eugene, Roswell's son, certainly did not die from any lack of variety in his life in the days when he went from Carlsbad to San Diego seeking a panacea for the weak digestion that was growing weaker month by month. He never flinched nor faltered. That "sweet pen" whose point was constantly renewed knew no vacation, although the hand that held it grew thinner and more transparent. The flesh often grew weary, but the spirit was as indomitable as ever when the final whisper came, and Eugene Field passed away as he slept.

The secret of Eugene Field's popularity while he lived and his hold upon American readers of a generation that knew him not in the flesh, and so are not interested in the quips and comments of the day, may be summed up in the single phrase—he was American. English was his tongue, but his heart was wholly American. His point of view was American. His wit, like that of Artemus Ward, was American; his irreverence for popular idols of the mart, the field and the forum was American; but above and beyond all his faith in womankind and motherhood was universal. He wrote love songs and lullabies to the glory of motherhood that will never pass out of our language, and they that quarrel with him because his mirthful wit grated on their intellectual nerves in his journalistic "Sharps and Flats" should remember that this would be a sorry world if there were no flats to make merry along the footpath way. The difference between Eugene Field and the national humorists of the Artemus Ward and Josh Billings type was that through

Lullaby.

Bush, bonnie, dinna greet;
Moder will rock her sweete -
Balow, my boy;
Whan that his toils beu done,
Daddie will come anone -
Hush thee, my lyttel one -
Balow, my boy!

Gin thou dost sleepe, perchance
Fairies will come to dance -
Balow, my boy;
Oft hable thy moder seene
Moonelicht and mirkland's queene
Dance on thy slumbring een -
Balow, my boy

When droued a bumble bee
Softly this song to thee;
"Balow, my boy";
And a wee heather bell
Plucked from a fayry dell
Chimed thee this rune hersell -
"Balow, my boy."

Soe, bonnie, dinna greet -
Moder soth rock her sweete -
Balow, my boy;
Gie me thy tiny hand,
Moder will hold it and
Lead thee till balow land -
Balow, my boy.

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all Field wrote there ran a vein of pure gold of human sympathy. Sometimes the vein ran thin and then again it expanded into rich pockets. It was of varying degrees of fineness, but always it was pure gold and always it was to be found in every serious thing he wrote, from the "Christmas Treasures" down to the unfinished chapters of the *Love Affairs*. In writing for a daily column of comment on the passing show of American life, there must needs be a modicum of slapstick jokes, the humor of which perishes with the explosion. In the case of Eugene Field their explosions were merely the *feu de joie* that accompanied but did not drown the deeper tones of the poet of motherhood. He sang of children and childhood, but it was the mothers' ears in every land that owns the English tongue that caught the sweet refrain:

*Balow my baby!
So shut your eyes while Mother sings
Of wonderful sights that be
And you shall see the beautiful things
As you rock on the misty sea
Where the old shoe rocked the fishermen three,
Wynken,
Blynkin,
and Nod.*

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